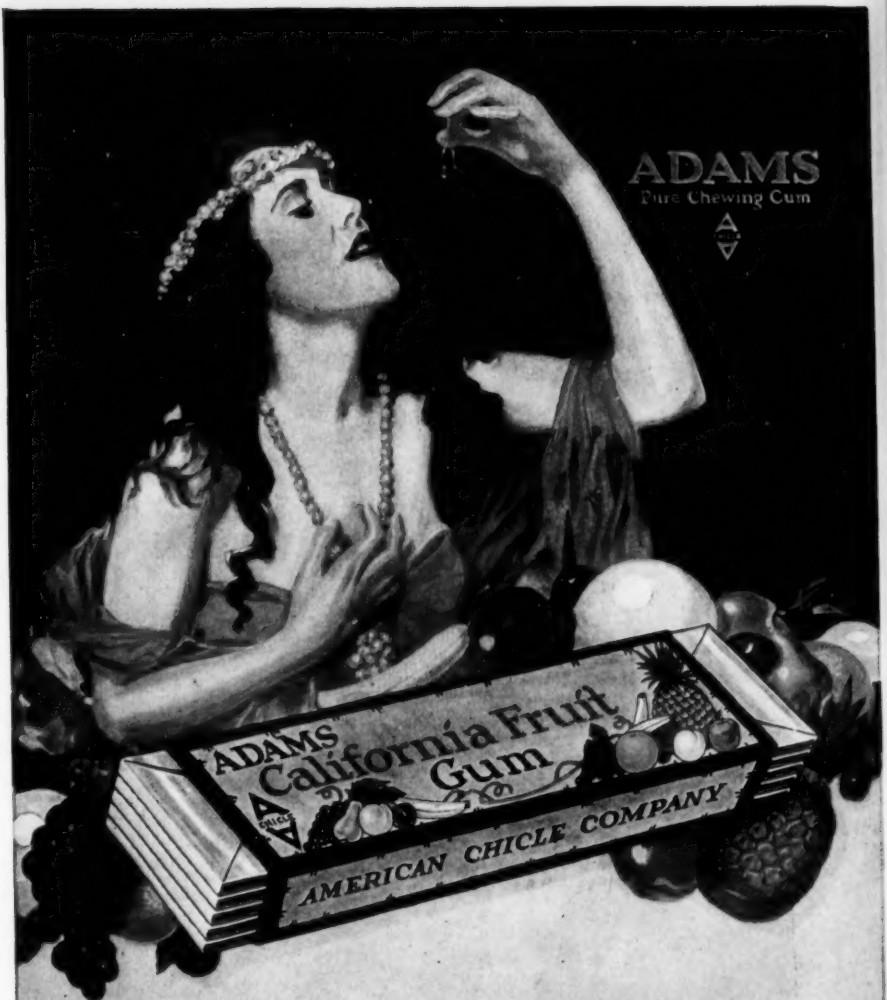


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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

AUG. 1919  
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# AINSLIE'S

*The Magazine That Entertains*

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Dorothy Verner,  
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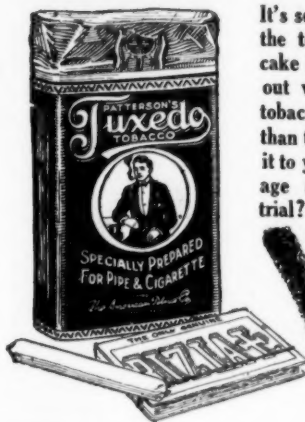
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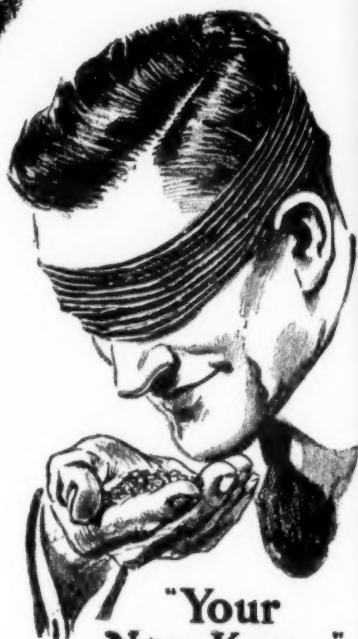
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VOL. XLIV.

AUGUST, 1919.

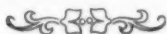
No. 1



## Her Own Kind

By Josephine A. Meyer

Author of "The God of Fools,"  
"The Effervescence of Nicolette," etc.



### CHAPTER I.

**T**WENTY years ago, there were no theaters in the upper Forties near Broadway. The houses were already in decline, perhaps at their lowest ebb then, as second-rate boarding and rooming houses. The blocks were noisy, dirty, and unkempt. You invited suspicion by living there. But even then it was convenient to theatrical agents and many of the playhouses, and struggling actors do not inquire who is on the next floor.

In the lugubrious five-o'clock dusk of an afternoon in January, a tall, slim girl walked with a free stride down one of these streets, her fine blue eyes seeming to measure and weigh the neighborhood with scorn. She was of the type that in those days was classified as "the Gibson Girl," broad and boyish in build, with a small, well-set head and rich gold hair that waved low from her white temples to a loose, classic knot. With her vigorous gait, her healthily glowing eyes and cheeks, her neat, simple clothing, she seemed so much an alien in those surroundings that any one watching might have experienced some-

thing of a shock on beholding her, apparently without hesitation or concern, mount the shabby stoop of one of the least inviting of the houses and let herself in with her own pass-key.

The house was a gaunt, ugly edition of most New York brownstone houses. Inside, there was a feverish attempt at cheerful wall paper—yellow tulips on a white ground—a dusty-carpeted stair, and the closed doors of what had once been the elongated parlor and the dim back dining room. The door of the latter opened as the step of the girl echoed in the hall, and on the threshold appeared an almost comically pathetic figure, the last person one would suspect of having any relation to the splendid young woman who greeted her. Perhaps some of the impulsiveness of the embrace with which the girl enveloped her mother might have been to conceal from herself the ugly incongruity of the bent, wasplike little figure, emphasized by the rusty finery of the tight, overtrimmed bodice, the crimped, dead-yellow hair, the face masklike with rouge and cosmetic.

"You're so late, Elaine!" exclaimed

the elder woman. She spoke with a slight cockney accent. "I thought for the moment you had got lost."

"Heavens! Do you suppose any one ever did really get lost in New York?" laughed the girl. "Streets numbered and blocks all nicely squared off. Besides, it's early. I didn't even wait for tea. Look what I brought us." She handed her mother a flimsy confectioner's box.

"Not—not from *their* party?" gasped her mother.

"You dear, foolish child! They're swells! I got there much too early. That's why I'm back so soon. When I found I had made the mistake of being the first arrival, I had to pretend I had come early because I shouldn't be able to stop long. People were just beginning to come when I left." There was no rancor in her tone, but her blue eyes darkened wistfully.

Meantime her mother had opened the box.

"Scones!" she exclaimed in a delight that missed everything but the fact in mind. "Real Scotch scones! Where did you get them?"

"In a New York bakery, trying to fool me into thinking that we are in England, where we shall be next summer, you and I, when we're rich."

"Then you think they'll keep the play on in spite of the critics?"

"Pooh—the *play*! With my criticisms, I don't need to weep over the failure of a play in which I get only a quarter of the salary I deserve! Oh, mammy, every one is so enthusiastic about me! I'm just—uplifted!"

She stood in that ill-furnished and dingy room under the flare of the sickly gas—a young figure of hope and ambition emanating a kind of thrilling glory. Her mother watched her a moment with a faint, rather colorless smile, then returned to the scones.

"I don't know how to cook these

over a gas stove," she ventured doubtfully.

"There you are!" exclaimed the girl, suddenly giving full breath to her rich young voice in a burst of impatience. "Cooking scones over the gas, living on warmed-up messes, doing all our own work ourselves, till we're either thankful that fussing with food has killed our appetites or else glad that having too little to eat most of the time makes us hungry enough to eat anything!"

"Elaine—what is the matter?" Her mother had some cause to look bewildered. "*You* brought the scones yourself. I just said—"

"Oh, it isn't your fault, mammy! I get impatient. It was seeing Ethel Burroughs' house and the quiet of it—servants and bells and everything. You know, I didn't half believe her when we were at college and she used to describe her home. I've a notion—this is funny, mammy—I've a notion she believes me. She thinks I'm acting just because I love it. She's coming to the play to-night, she and some friends. They want me to go out with them for supper after, and I said I would. When we come home, I'll get them to drop me at the Marlborough Hotel, as if we lived there."

"We have lived there, Elaine. The second year I was playing in 'Valentine's Day.' You ought to be able to remember it."

"Yes, yes—I remember it and all the other hotels! Thousands of them and schools—but not one home, and I'm twenty years old!"

"But—dear, the profession is so uncertain. It isn't as if you always had an engagement. If I'd only been able to keep up in 'Sour Grapes' last year!" She sighed, adding vindictively, "I should never have gone to a doctor! I think that started me being ill—I do, really!"

"That's silly and, besides, it's no use

regretting the past. I've got a future. Look at my notices! I'm made. Everybody says so. Did you read the evening papers I left you? Look—here is the *World*—'Elaine Harcourt, a beautiful young woman unknown on the stage before last night'—they don't remember me as 'the cheild' in 'Far From Home'—'stepped into fame by walking off with the second act which, without her, would have been as tedious as the first and third. Miss Harcourt is not only beautiful. This young woman has apparently considerable intelligence and, what is even more rare among actresses, real humor. Her characterization of the giggling young school-girl made that person seem the only human being in the play.'"

"When I played *Annabelle* in London, they said that about me," said her mother reminiscently. "At least, they said I was the only one who could act. 'A peerless comedienne'—that's what they called me. You take after me. I always liked *real* comedy—something that makes you laugh one minute and cry the next. That vaudeville stuff—those horrid little plays I've been doing lately—there's nothing in them. I think they made me ill. If I could get a part like *Annabelle*, now, or *Gerta* in 'Valentine's Day,' I know I would be fine. After all, I'm not forty yet."

Her wistful, monotonous voice trailed into silence. Elaine had not been listening attentively, but the last words brought a flicker into her eyes. Why would her mother lie to her about her age? She was at least forty-three. It seemed pitifully old to the girl. She glanced across the shabby room from where she lounged in the gaudy green morris chair which had a mean way of collapsing backward with an alarming clatter. Her mother stood stroking the scone box, her eyes almost fishy with sentimental recollections. A little tremor of repugnance quenched the pity in Elaine's heart.

"I wish I had my scrap book that's in storage," her mother was saying. "You'd have loved reading what they used to say about Helena Harcourt. I'll bet there are those in England who remember Helena Harcourt yet."

Suddenly Elaine shivered.

"I'm going to be different!" she protested aloud, then blushed deeply. "Oh, mammy"—she rose and once again concealed her mother from herself with a hug—"you've slaved to send me to college—and give me things—"

"But I couldn't see you through. You won't get a diploma. What good is it? I was hoping you'd be a teacher. If only I hadn't got ill! College don't help you much on the stage."

"Who knows? Anyway, it got me acquainted with Ethel Burroughs. I've seen her home—and I'm going to have one like it!"

Her mother puckered her penciled eyes dubiously.

"If I thought it made you discontented—" she began.

"Discontented!" exploded Elaine, with a wide gesture of disgust. "Are you contented with this?"

"I always wanted you to be happy," said her mother uneasily.

"I shall be, mammy, don't worry!" She laughed and rose from her chair. "I shall have fame and fortune and a home—you'll see!"

## CHAPTER II.

Elaine was not given to introspection. When she left the house earlier than necessary to go to the theater, she believed her own excuse that she wanted to get down to try a new make-up. It never entered her mind that she was anxious to get away from her mother because the latter depressed her and made her uneasy. She unquestioningly accepted as love that passionately protesting loyalty which served her for affection and hid even from herself the

fact that she was ashamed of her mother.

She walked through the long, quiet street to Fifth Avenue, dreaming that she belonged in one of the big, discreetly lit homes that she was passing. She fancied herself walking up the well-swept stoop and then, inside, up the broad stairs, past the second floor—her mother's and father's apartments—to her own suite on the third floor.

She had unconsciously assumed the rôle of Ethel Burroughs. Her own father was a distorted set of memories, merging from some one whose coming was looked forward to with delight, past the horrible years of her later childhood when his periodic appearances brought him into her life as a terror of noise and drunken altercation, down to that last, clearest vision of him four summers ago, dying for three hot weeks in a hospital. He had then been a man so yellowed and old and broken that it had been with revulsion that she had watched her mother weeping at his bedside.

It was then, at sensitive sixteen, that it had first occurred to her that she was not only playing a part among her companions in the more or less fashionable schools to which her mother sent her, but that perhaps she had been playing a part with herself. Her mirror showed her a fine, healthy, and increasingly beautiful person. Helena Harcourt had a reputation for vivacious prettiness which, with the aid of her make-up box, she had sustained even in the eyes of her daughter, until that breakdown two years ago. Elaine could not judge her father's appearance except through her mother's reminiscent admiration, but his deathbed had been an outrageous revelation that, in spite of good looks, the family had its roots in some dark strata below even the lower middle class at which her school-mates so elevated their snobbish little noses.

But she outgrew any morbid idea of inferiority. Thanks to her mother's devotion and theatrical successes and her own intelligence and perseverance, she adapted herself to her queenly name and her handsome body.

But even vigor, youth, beauty, and good sense cannot entirely blot out certain unsatisfied cravings. In Elaine's case, these took the quaint form of dreaming of houses—great, quiet mansions where meals were all plain, well cooked, and served with ceremony, where life floated placidly and aimlessly over a deep sea of assured comfort, where money wasn't mentioned.

She left the Avenue and turned west at Thirty-fifth Street, heading into a bitter wind. If she had walked down Sixth Avenue, she would have saved herself that.

The doorkeeper at the theater handed her a box as she went in. It contained roses from Ethel, with a little note that Ethel and her friends would wait in the lobby for her.

Up in her dressing room, beyond the winding iron stairs, Caroline Ingersoll, who shared her quarters, was powdering her hair.

"Hello! You're early," she remarked, without looking up. "Got flowers, too. Friends in the house again?"

"Surely. I make it a practice always to have them out there," answered Elaine cheerfully.

"You might introduce me to some of your newspaper johnnies," observed Miss Ingersoll. "But seriously," she added, "what made them roast the little play like that?"

"Do you like it?" asked Elaine.

Miss Ingersoll shrugged.

"Swell critics sometimes call a play a 'vehicle.' That's a carriage, isn't it? And when it breaks down, you've got to walk. You're likely to be a jobless Sarah Bernhardt in a week. Oh, my dear, you'll get like me—to the devil



with what they say about the cast; the play's the thing."

"You mean you think personal notices don't amount to anything?" demanded Elaine incredulously.

"Of course they help you in the long run, but they aren't much good if your play doesn't last long enough for managers to get to see it. I don't know how you're fixed, but I need my weekly envelope just now. Of course I can get something in one of Pendleton's shows—on the road. But I want to stay in New York. Gee!" she sighed. "I wish Sam Littman would fall in love with me and push me ahead like he did Alice Tremaine! Say, I know what you came early for. It was to hook me up, wasn't it?"

### CHAPTER III.

Ethel Burroughs met Elaine in the lobby of the theater after the play. Ethel was a pretty girl, but, with all her background of wealth and good breeding, she lacked the almost majestic charm of beauty that sat so radiantly on Elaine's graceful head.

She had three companions with her, two young men and another woman. Elaine did not recognize in the last the necessary chaperon, even though she was introduced as Mrs. Hale. This may have been because the chaperons Elaine pictured were never so young and congenial. She was the sister of one of the men—the smaller and less attractive of the two. There was some suggestion of likeness between them—the same clear, dark complexion, fine features, and shining black hair—but the vivacity that gave life and fascination to Mrs. Hale's face and that sparkled in her hazel eyes was wholly lacking in his. Roderick Gravaine's almost Oriental imperturbation, his curiously keen glance, his tendency to speak little, vaguely interested, but did not attract Elaine. The other youth, Harold Far-

leigh, tall, blond, and beaming his open admiration of her, captured her attention and won her liking on the spot.

Ethel was pleased that Mrs. Hale and Harold Farleigh became immediate victims of Elaine's loveliness, but she was not satisfied to let Roderick successfully resist the spell and spent considerable energy, during supper, directing his attention to her chum.

"Miss Harcourt sings, Roderick," she declared once. "You're a high contralto, aren't you, Elaine?"

"Mezzo-soprano, they call it," smiled Elaine.

"Have you ever thought of going in for grand opera?" asked Mrs. Hale.

"My voice isn't big enough for that," replied Elaine. "And it means so much study."

"A year or two in Paris—that's all." Mrs. Hale spoke as if it were easily accomplished.

"What I was going to say," put in Ethel, "was why not have Elaine sing those songs of Roderick's?"

"A recital?" asked Elaine.

"In public?" questioned Roderick, startled into the conversation.

"As public as you will let me make it, in my drawing-room, some afternoon soon," returned Ethel.

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Hale.

"Nonsense!" Roderick interrupted. "It would be ludicrous—those songs!"

"You're always declaring that we can't sing them right because we haven't the voice. Now that some one with a voice would be willing to try them for you, you back out of having them done. Well, I'll get the songs from mother, and Miss Harcourt shall sing them. You shan't even be invited—since you're so ungracious."

"It is not ungraciousness." His face flushed darkly, but his voice was even and quite cold. "It's just that I prefer not to be made a fool of."

"Is that your advance opinion of my voice?" inquired Elaine, a little stung.

"I did not mention your singing," replied Gravaire, with the same coolness. "The songs are stupid little efforts I made at composition when I was an ambitious and rather rash young student of the violin."

"Do you play the violin?" Elaine asked eagerly. "Oh, I love it!"

"I only play for my own amusement."

"And do you keep up your practice?"

"Yes. I'm critical. It wouldn't amuse me unless I played correctly." He permitted the shadow of a smile to pass across his face.

Elaine looked more closely at him.

"That is the spirit of a real artist!" she exclaimed with warm enthusiasm.

He shrugged his shoulders and looked away. His manner was either extremely rude or painfully diffident.

"Only that artists enjoy exhibiting their skill and the fruits of their—well, their efforts," said Farleigh. "Don't they, Miss Harcourt? Don't all great actors love to act before audiences? They don't go off alone and hide in a dark room to do it."

"Oh, but that's different. When you act, you're doing it all yourself. When you play, the instrument is helping. You listen to the instrument," argued Mrs. Hale.

"You're listening to the player. The instrument itself is dumb," corrected Roderick unexpectedly.

"Then you *would* go off in a dark room and recite pieces to yourself?" demanded Farleigh with a laugh.

"Some poetry can be enjoyed that way," answered Roderick.

"Yes, I do it sometimes—with Shakespeare and verse I never expect to get the chance to do before audiences," nodded Elaine. "My greatest ambition is to play in Shakespearean rôles, but I don't suppose I shall ever realize it."

"Why not?" asked Roderick abruptly.

"Because Shakespeare is not frequently enough put on."

"The true spirit of the artist would not play anything but what it considered the best," hinted Roderick.

"Oh, I say! Look what we'd miss, we fellows who don't care for Shakespeare!" protested Farleigh. "I think it'd be a beastly shame to smother a good comedienne under a bunch of blank verse!"

"Your advice would keep me off the stage most of the time," remonstrated Elaine to Roderick.

"Would that make you unhappy?"

"In many ways, yes," replied Elaine with a secret smile.

"Actors always grudge every day they are not acting, don't they?" asked Ethel. "It must be a wonderful life—they love it so. What is the lure, Elaine? Is it the admiration, the direct applause, or is it something else?"

"If you had heard Caroline Ingersoll in my dressing room to-night," replied Elaine, "you'd say it assuredly was something else! Oh, there's glamour to it, but, after all, it's a profession as well as an art."

"Profession and art!" repeated Roderick contemptuously. "The terms are contradictory!"

"Hardly!" Elaine colored indignantly. "Most people feel the other way about it. Think of what the word 'amateur' has come to connote."

"Good! A palpable hit!" judged Mrs. Hale, pleased by Elaine's ready rejoinder.

Roderick's eyebrows went up ever so slightly.

"It's not the word, but the age that is disreputable," said he. "Must we all measure by the commercial standards of the day?"

"It isn't a matter of the age," put in Farleigh. "Since ever folks had to eat and keep warm, they've been 'commercial.' They sold what they could.

Amusement was necessary to leisure, so art became a commodity even in those good old days."

"Real art is not a commodity. It is self-expression."

"Tell that to the great masters! They didn't disdain being paid for expressing themselves."

"It must be degrading, none the less—selling your skill, your very soul, to any one who has the price!"

"Oh, see here, Roderick!" exclaimed Mrs. Hale. "That's putting it a bit strong! If I could be a Velásquez or a Booth, I'd try to bear up under the—what did you call it?—'degradation.'" "

"Don't let him frighten you off the stage, Elaine," begged Ethel. "We have too much to lose."

Roderick, appearing irritated rather than convinced, dropped the argument and sat through the remainder of the party with a taciturn and aloof patience that had a dampening effect on the others. Elaine, who by this time had come to dislike him thoroughly, wondered why Ethel had invited him.

Ethel herself answered the question as they were getting their wraps.

"I never saw Roderick so cynical," she said. "I was so anxious for him to meet Elaine. He's so interested in her type—independent, gifted girls who have brains. What was the matter with him, Louise?"

"There's no accounting for Roderick's moods," answered Mrs. Hale. "My dear," she added warmly to Elaine, "you're wonderful! You have everything to make you a great actress. I'm not flattering. You love it, don't you?"

"Acting—oh, yes." There was something a bit mechanical in Elaine's voice.

"I hope you haven't let anything Roderick said upset you." Mrs. Hale looked at her keenly. "I think his objection to public performances borders on the morbid. You know, Ethel, you'll

never really get his permission to give a recital of his songs."

The men were waiting for them in the lobby. Elaine felt a thrill of pleasure at the sight of them. It seemed to her there was something noticeably aristocratic about them—in their way of standing, the clean lines of their profiles, their quiet nonchalance of bearing that was not a swagger.

"It's snowing hard," announced Harold, catching sight of them.

"Snowing!" repeated Elaine in dismay.

"And you have no carriage shoes on!" Ethel looked at her friend's feet.

"I forgot them," lied Elaine.

"Well, it's only a step to the carriage," consoled Mrs. Hale. "And they've already cleared the snow from before the entrance here. When you get home, you can run right in and take off your slippers immediately. Where shall we drop you?"

Elaine hesitated half a second. Then her pride vanquished prudence.

"The Hotel Marlborough," she replied.

"Bully—the snow is probably cleared away there, too," said Farleigh, helping her down the steps, over the wet sidewalk, into the carriage.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Because of Elaine's excellent constitution, a half-mile walk in the snow in evening slippers did not result in anything worse than the ruination of her best shoes.

The next day, being Wednesday, was a *matinée* day. Elaine trudged down to the theater through the thin, persistent, wind-blown snow, for the storm continued without abatement. As she passed the Marlborough Hotel, she decided that, since her friends might ask for her there, she had better leave some word. She told the clerk that she had intended staying there, but at the last

moment had been invited home by friends. He was young and impressed by her beauty. When, instead of giving her "new address," she said that she would call for her mail, far from considering this an imposition, the clerk, with the prospect of seeing her again, agreed that it would be an excellent arrangement.

Two men of the company were standing in the stage entrance, smoking. As she went by, they raised their hats and held up the course of their spirited conversation. She could guess its trend from the look on their faces, secretive and searching, the look that comes when an unconfirmed rumor of the complete failure and discontinuation of a play begins to circulate among the cast.

"I wonder what they've heard about it," thought Elaine, as she went up to her dressing room.

Outside, the two men speculated hopefully on Elaine's cheerful expression. They believed that she was in possession of inside information, and that it was good news.

"Well," greeted Miss Ingersoll, "you're looking happy. There are folks who get a lot of fun out of funerals."

"What?" asked Elaine, astonished.

"We're closing Saturday."

"Who told you?"

"The line at the box office. There's an unofficial report that there'll be a crowd of three people out front this afternoon."

"You can't judge from the first Wednesday matinée."

"Take my advice, dearie, and don't jolly yourself along. If you've got a good, husky gentleman friend, make him kidnap a manager and bring him here to see you act within the next week."

"Why don't you follow your own advice?" inquired Elaine.

"I would if I had your press notices. Honest, I'm talking seriously. They

want to see you act and here's your chance. And if my advice lands you anything, don't forget me."

"No fear."

"Though, after all, I'll probably close with Pendleton. The road for me again, and, gee, how I hate it!" She sighed and rose, as the call boy's voice was heard behind the door shouting her name. "What a life!" she ejaculated half seriously as she went out. "Why wasn't I born with a taste for cooking?"

"You'd rather be a cook?" demanded Elaine with an incredulous laugh.

"Cook nothing! I'd have been a wife!" Miss Ingersoll came back to the doorway to retort. Then, "I'm coming!" she called, scampering downstairs. "Gee, aren't our three patrons awful fussy about our being on cue?"

"How did your party like the play last night?" asked Blackthorne, an actor who made his entrance with Elaine, as they waited in the wings together.

"Quite well," answered Elaine.

"What did they say about the acting?"

"We didn't talk much about acting or plays," replied Elaine.

At this moment one of the actors named Croft made his exit to them, evidently convulsed with repressed mirth.

"Campbell's out to break up the whole company. He's making the play over on the spot, and he leaves us high and dry without a cue to hold on to. Carrie Ingersoll is a sight. She keeps her face up stage so that the audience can't see it, but she can't get out a line. It's really a funny comedy today."

"Does the audience think so?" asked Elaine.

"Audience! There are more on the stage than in the house. The first act was as flat as a rehearsal. At least some of us are enjoying this one!"

"I don't think it ever helps a play to guy it. My mother's awfully hard on people who gag their lines," said Elaine. "She says it's not fair to any one."

"I'd like to see any one act straight to that house! It's hollow—sepulchral!"

"I can't play to an empty house," agreed Blackthorne. "I need response. It's the artistic temperament, I guess."

"Artistic temperament! Why, the real artist doesn't need an audience of any sort! He sometimes even resents one!" exclaimed Elaine, before she recalled how this impression had come to exist in her mind.

"Art for art's sake?" bantered Croft. "Lord, I thought the stage at least was free from that! What sense is there in acting unless some one is looking on?"

"Looking on and appreciating," put in Blackthorne. "I'm sensitive. If I feel myself losing my points, it kills my work."

"You want your audience to do half your work," suggested Elaine.

"The audience is the instrument for an actor to play on," returned Croft.

His answer awakened further memories of last night's discussion, but it was too close to Elaine's cue for her to continue the argument, even if she had had a reply.

She went on the stage determined to prove her own belief in the merit of good acting apart from its effect. She played with special spirit, infusing some of her seriousness into the demoralized cast, who ceased to gibe lest their reputations suffer against the background of her work. Gradually she became conscious of a growing cordiality and interest in the thinly sprinkled theater. Yes, the audience was an instrument. Perhaps the real artist can wake to life even a poor instrument.

As she was to ascend the steep iron stairs to her dressing room, at the

close of the act, a strange man, small, dark, thickly built, and extremely natty, called after her.

"Miss Harcourt?"

"Yes."

He approached her, and she noticed the coarse ugliness of his heavy Semitic features.

"When do you close here?" he asked.

"I don't know."

He looked her over with almost offensive calculation; then searched in his pocket for a card.

"I'm Littmann—Sam Littmann."

"Yes, sir." She flushed.

"When you're through here, come round to our offices. I may have something for you."

"Yes, sir." She took the card.

"This your New York debut?"

"I've played small parts."

"Well—that was a good performance this afternoon. Let me hear from you."

He lifted his hand to his hat and, though the latter remained stationary, the gesture was impressive. Then he sauntered off with his slovenly step.

"Some people have all the luck," said a voice of forced cheerfulness, following Elaine up the stairs.

It was Croft.

"Audiences are hard to gauge," consoled Elaine.

"Yes, if you're going to be spied on," growled Croft. "He probably thinks he was damn' clever, sneaking in on a snowy Wednesday matinée!"

Elaine said nothing. She felt she had proved her point in her argument with him so completely that it would be unkind to gloat.

## CHAPTER V.

"Well, it's all over, mammy," announced Elaine Thursday night, entering the room where her mother was sitting up waiting for her. "The play closes Saturday night."

Mrs. Harcourt eyed her skeptically.

"Then why are you looking so happy?" she asked suspiciously.

Elaine experienced a fleeting annoyance, which she checked before it could gather her forehead into a perceptible frown.

"I suppose," she said, turning her impatience upon herself, verbally at least, "I suppose it's because I'm such a fool."

"For expecting a better chance with Littmann?" demanded her mother quickly. "That's not foolish. Do you know, Elaine, I just thought of it to-day. Old Rogers once told me that Mr. Littmann liked my work. Maybe he knows who you are. Oh, I don't think you're foolish to look forward to something big from him."

This time Elaine's brows knit in spite of herself.

"I wasn't thinking of Littmann," she said, curbing her voice. "I hope he will do something for me, but we know what managers are. That isn't what's making me happy, as you call it, to-night. It's this." She handed her mother a square envelope addressed to her at the Marlborough Hotel. "I got it on my way to the theater."

Her mother opened it and read, maintaining an exasperatingly puzzled look the while.

CLAIRBRIDGE, N. J.

MY DEAR MISS HARCOURT: The snow is so wonderful in the country and the hills about my mother's house so tempting for tobogganing that not only have I packed up my child and myself to come down here and stay with her two weeks while my husband is away, but I have persuaded her and my brother to throw open our doors this weekend to a house party. Won't you be one of us? Come down Sunday morning and stay till you must go back to act Monday night. We shan't invite many people. Ethel Burroughs and Harold Farleigh will be there, and perhaps three or four others who, I am sure, will prove congenial to you. My mother has heard so much of our new Fanny Davenport that she is almost as anxious as I am to have you come down. And I know it will please Roderick, and we'll con-

trive to make it an occasion for that "recital" Ethel spoke of.

Please let me know you are coming. Very cordially yours,  
LOUISE G. HALE.

"Where is Clairbridge?" asked Mrs. Harcourt.

"Not far. I've heard it's a beautiful country place, and awfully swell. Mammy," Elaine cried with delight, "can't you see how wonderful it's going to be?"

"You'll need a new dress and a hat. You want to get a coat, too. Did you get your salary?" asked Mrs. Harcourt.

"Do you think I'd spend it all on clothes?" demanded Elaine. "I'm not quite so mad."

"We don't need to economize, with that Littmann prospect——"

"Even if I were sure of that, it would be at least three weeks before I got anything from it. No, I shall go as I am. These people are the sort whose aristocracy goes deeper than fine clothes. Think of the privilege of being with them and considered one of them!"

She threw back her head and closed her eyes in the ecstasy of anticipation. A broken little sigh from her mother brought her back with a start to the untidy, ill-lit room, with its open folding bed, its tables and chairs littered with newspapers, unmended clothes, cracked china and kitchenware, and even her own stained and mangled slippers. Her mother, in a torn and faded wrapper, her face cadaverous without its make-up, her stiff yellow hair in curl papers, sat still gazing stupidly at the letter in her hand. Mrs. Harcourt, aroused by the silence, noticed her daughter's glance roving about the room.

"Oh," she exclaimed, jumping up quickly, "fancy me forgetting! Mrs. Sutton had clam chowder for supper, and she sent some up. It was so good I saved a bit for you. I'll have it heated up in half a second!"

Mrs. Hale met Elaine at Clairbridge



station in the vivid blue-and-whiteness of that looked-for Sunday morning. She led her to where a sleigh was waiting for them, its sleek, high-bred horses twitching nervously to the unaccustomed jingle of their belled harness.

"They're all at church," said Mrs. Hale. "That gives you a chance to rest up at home before you must meet them." And she beguiled the ride to Gravaine Manor with short, pithy histories of each of the guests.

The manor itself was somewhat disappointing to Elaine when at last she saw it. The grounds were so extensive and beautiful that she had expected one of those anomalies that stood for wealth and elegance in those days, combining Romanesque cupolas with Elizabethan gables, all mounted upon a clattering base of slender colonial columns and balustrades. Though the house had been built in the sixties, and possessed all the earmarks of its period, it managed to be both dignified and pleasing to the eye. In spite of its mansard roof with wooden-lace edging, its unclassified columns with fretwork caps, it lived down its own disfiguring characteristics by the abundance and noble spacing of the finer ones, such as the long, clustered windows, the low, broad veranda, the generous height and breadth of the walls, free from the usual attempt at towers.

Elaine was rather dazed when she at last reached her room, dazed, but overjoyed. The room was in character with her dreams of what it should be—high-ceilinged, staid, and grand rather than luxurious. There were flowers on her bureau, but these could not completely soften or dispel the air of prim, well-established dignity.

She removed her outdoor wraps and approached the old-fashioned cheval glass that stood near the window. She saw within it an extremely handsome girl with glowing cheeks, sunny hair that

fell down over a white forehead, and happy, sparkling eyes. It did not matter that her dress was not of the latest cut; its soft blue tone brought out sapphire glints in the eyes above it, its simplicity emphasized the long lines of the graceful figure.

She had been brought up to regard herself objectively in a mirror, and as she surveyed her reflection, her satisfaction was no ordinary conceit.

"I shall act well," she mused whimsically. "I love this part."

She did not disappoint herself or her hosts, when, after church, the rest of the company met her in the drawing-room, introduced by Mrs. Hale. She liked their quiet, but cordial manner toward her.

Mrs. Gravaine especially fascinated her. She was more like Roderick than Louise, though much like both. In her the suggestion of something Oriental was very striking, partly because of the neatness of her build and her spare gestures, and partly because of the rather stony placidity of her mien. But in spite of the formality of her manner and the quaint stiltedness of her greeting, Elaine felt that there was kindness and warmth back of her reserve. She was small and slight and dressed in mourning. On her thin-skinned, pink-nailed hand flashed a diamond or two, not conspicuously, yet as inevitably part of her composition as her refined, pinched-in nostrils. Elaine remembered the time her own mother had worn diamonds, but so differently.

Conversation turned again to music and Roderick's songs. He brushed aside the mention of them, but less peevishly. He half promised to show them to Elaine, to let her judge whether they were worth the trial of her voice.

Later that afternoon, Mrs. Hale, in one of those intimate little asides that did so much to make Elaine feel at her

ease, begged her not to let Roderick off with the promise alone.

"I'll play for you. Come over to the piano and stand beside me. Perhaps, if you sing some other songs first, he may be more willing to let you try his," she said.

Elaine was rather taken aback at the diffidence this scheming implied, though she followed Mrs. Hale obediently. But when the latter fluttered the leaves of a song book, inquiring, loud enough for the other guests to hear, "Do you sing in German?" Elaine, with the self-confidence of assured success, dispensed with subterfuges.

"Yes, but I prefer to sing the songs Mr. Gravaine said I might try. Will you get them for me?" she added nonchalantly to Roderick.

There was a moment's silence, during which Mrs. Hale sat staring ruefully at the notes on the keyboard. She was thinking how fond Roderick was of saying that he might be led, but never driven.

Roderick gazed a moment at Elaine, who returned his glance impersonally, in the slight lift of her eyebrows a mild inquiry as to why her request was delayed in the granting. Then he bowed his head courteously and, with a queer hardening of his jaw, stepped over to the music cabinet. He unlocked a special drawer in this with a key which he took out of his pocket, and fetched Elaine a worn leather portfolio that was familiar only to his family and closest friends.

Elaine received it from him with a smile which implied that she was gratified, but not overwhelmed by his amiability.

The songs were simple, but full of a piquant originality. Elaine was surprised to find them so good. His modesty had seemed unreal to her, and she had suspected it to be a cloak for inferior work.

Elaine's beautiful contralto voice and

histrionic charm transmitted to her audience not only the songs, but her own delightful personality, and added to the effectiveness of the compositions. Mrs. Hale enjoyed the double triumph of the brother she worshiped and the new acquaintance for whom she had already a marked affection. Applause and admiring comments divided themselves equally between composer and interpreter.

Roderick himself was silent, perhaps not wishing to seem enthusiastic about his own work. Elaine glanced over to where he was standing behind his mother's chair. Mrs. Gravaine's face, beneath its veil of immobility, showed pleasure that was real and deep-rooted, though restrained. Even as Elaine looked at him, Roderick's unresponsiveness died out, and in its place there kindled a brief, vivid flash of emotion. His self-command, returning, was so complete that Elaine concluded she had imagined his agitation. She did not disturb herself long with any thought of him. She was too happy in her dominance over her eager listeners.

She dealt out her encores like queenly favors, deigning to consult with them in her choice of what to sing next—and next. They kept her busy for an hour. Once, half consciously, she sought about the room for Roderick, whom she missed among those who clamored so flatteringly for her to continue. She saw that he had moved to the far end of the room beyond the glow of the early lit piano lamp. He stood near a window, his arms folded, the delicate lines of his austere, but almost womanly, profile silhouetted against the fading yellow twilight. His haughty exclusiveness, the forbidding stiffness of his averted body, suggested a sort of exalted sulkiness. Was he offended because she dared to sing Gounod and Schubert as well as Gravaine?

She began to take a keener interest in this moody young man.

## CHAPTER VI.

Partly because she was not sure of the proper time to appear before dinner and partly because the elegance of the great drawing-room hypnotized and drew her even in its firelit emptiness, Elaine, who had dressed quickly, strayed downstairs before the others. She threw herself into a fringed velvet chair before the fire and, with a cat's vain complacency, watched the glow and shimmer on her satin slipper and her silk gown.

She permitted herself to dream for a few luxurious moments not only that she need not go back to-morrow to the sordid room she knew as home, but that this whole house was hers, with its grandeur, its wide-flung grounds, its rich rooms, its innumerable servants.

Suddenly she became aware of some one else in the room. She sat bolt upright, and Roderick Gravaine moved toward her out of the shadows.

"Do you, too, like to be alone?" he asked.

His voice was so friendly and different that even the sight of him in the full light of the leaping flames but half convinced her that she had not mistaken some one else for him.

"Yes," she answered mechanically and could not think how to add to this to keep it from sounding curt.

He filled the pause by approaching and leaning upon the mantel shelf above her. He seemed constrained, but not hurt by her terseness.

"One must have spiritual resources to be able to enjoy solitude," he declared at length sententiously, adroitly including himself in his compliment. "You have a rich imagination. I can see that by the way you sang my songs."

"Thank you."

"On the contrary—thank *you*." There was a strange vibration in his voice. "I never expected to have them interpreted so beautifully."

"Why, Mr. Gravaine—I——"

She broke off, somewhat stunned by the unexpectedness of his praise. Her innate honesty, moreover, was in turmoil. The songs had seemed to her so free from complexities that she began to doubt whether she had understood them fully, after all. She thought it due to her conscience to tell him so, but tact warned her that it was due to his vanity not to. He remained silent, and she looked up at him wonderingly.

Though his face, all but his chin and a thin, pointed, rather comic wedge of his nose, was in deep shadow, she realized with a shock what it would have taken a less sophisticated girl a month to discover. He was in love with her!

The wave of triumph passed, but subconsciously all her powers rushed to aid her to stimulate his admiration. She did not even stop long enough to ask herself whether she wanted it—whether she reciprocated it in the least.

She continued to speak of his work, venturing a few mild criticisms. She pleaded with him not to give it up, and won from him the admission that he had not done so entirely. Then she voiced a desire to hear him play his violin.

"Do you think you could be as keen a critic as you have been of the songs?" he asked.

She thought for a moment that he was jesting, twitting her because she had been fulsome in her praise. But his face was very serious. Was he so sensitive as to magnify the bad and discount all the good in comments on his work? And to resent—— But that would be insufferable! She could hardly believe it of him. None the less, she proceeded with caution.

"I know good playing," she answered evasively.

"Do you have to act to-morrow night?"

"No, my play is closed."

"Why not stay here a few days?"

My sister is to be here a fortnight. There's no reason why you should hurry home, is there?"

The warm luxury of the room swam through Elaine's head, and the studied evenness of his voice seemed to add a pleasant languor to her body. The promise of rich ease for a week, together with the delightful excitement of his repressed, but evident, infatuation, captivated her.

"I have a sort of appointment with Littmann," she murmured dreamily.

"With whom?"

"Littmann. The manager, you know."

"Can't it wait? Must you start right in again to act?"

The necessity seemed indeed small at this distance from her mother. A shadow crossed her forehead.

"Mother may need me. She is not very well."

"But a week? It will be a rest for you. She ought not mind. And if she is ill, I know a splendid nurse whom mother had. I'll phone to her to-morrow for you——"

"Oh, dear no! Mother isn't so ill as all that!" Elaine flushed in her alarm. "It's just that she might worry."

"Not if you let her know you are well and comfortable here. You can telephone her every day."

"She has no telephone."

"At the Marlborough?"

"We're—we're not there now. That is—mother is staying with some friends."

"Then surely she doesn't need you. Do write."

"You'd all get fearfully tired of me."

"Let us judge for ourselves. Louise is already very fond of you."

"But your mother?"

"She's been attracted to you more quickly than to any one I've ever known."

"Then surely now is the time for me to leave—retire in the midst of my popularity. That's the safest maxim for an actress!"

He did not answer her instantly. She attributed this to his disapproval of her levity. She wondered whether his pride was balking at having to urge her to remain.

"I'll play for you if you'll stay," he offered at last.

His features were blotted in shadows, his voice, as usual, was smooth and well mastered, but she was acute enough to realize the cost of what he was laying at her feet.

"Then I'll stay." She raised her smiling face, her eyes bright with sympathetic understanding.

His body slackened perceptibly—a confession of the strain he had endured. Elaine, noticing this, had some compunctions about learning so much from him against his will.

"Shall I be so easily bribed not to leave the stage when I try to retire, I wonder?" she speculated playfully.

"Are you so fond of acting?" he demanded, and again she heard that faint note of disapprobation in his voice.

"Yes."

"You wouldn't give it up?"

She stared steadily at the fire and smiled, a slow, quiet smile.

"Yes, I would give it up."

He withdrew his arm from the mantel with a quick, nervous jerk. Then he turned abruptly away from her.

"It's time we had some light here," he said, crossing to the bell. She remained silently smiling at the fire.

That night, in the big bed in the high-ceilinged room, she thought over this scene and wondered at herself. Nothing was clearer to her than that she was not in love with Roderick, yet it thrilled her to think that he was in love with her. When, after supper, they had changed to warm, bulky, out-

door clothes in order to toboggan under the moon, she had observed his tendency to keep near her. Once, when there had been an upset in the snow, he had helped her to her feet by taking both her hands. And on the last slide down, he had sat behind her and steadied her with his hand upon her arm. Indoors, with the other guests about, he hardly seemed to see her.

In retrospect, his stealth and caution should have been either amusing or annoying, but they were neither. She had often been admired by men, and some of the bolder spirits of her mother's world had attempted to court her. Even here, Harold Farleigh was confessedly her victim, too, following her about with open adoration on his handsome face. Yet none of these others had ever awakened in her any emotion save passing boredom, if not slight disgust. It had remained for Roderick Gravaire, with his exasperating vanity and petulance, to claim her attention and fascinate her imagination.

Like all girls, she had had her dreams of love and marriage. In her early teens, they had been inseparable in her thoughts. Later, in a kind of revulsion, marriage had stood in opposition to the art she adored. She expected to fall in love—she believed all great artists had to—but marry—never!

And now——

Suppose he had slipped into a proposal there in the firelight!

She was not at all sure her answer would have been no.

## CHAPTER VII.

Elaine was prevailed upon to stay the week, the happiest week in her life, she reflected on the train that carried her home in the gloomy drizzle of the Monday morning ending it. It had been a taste of what she had yearned all her life to possess.

Through the genial opulence of the

days, like a fiery copper thread, ran the memory of Roderick Gravaire. Strangely enough, though he had so pressingly begged her to stay, his presence had been fitful and fleeting. He had played his violin for her Monday night, and she had been forced to acknowledge with sincerity the astonishing mastery of his touch. There had been something warm and yielding that night in the way he had listened to her when she had begged him to remove his light from under its bushel—to give the world his expression of the world's loveliness. As she looked back now, she was a bit disconcerted to remember that that first night she had been nearer to him than at any subsequent time.

The next day he had avoided her so pointedly that even Mrs. Hale had noticed it and had felt the necessity of remarking on it.

"He's queer," she had explained lightly. "I suppose it's his temperament. The Gravairens were all like that. They carried their grouchiness down the line as a family tradition, as if it were something to be proud of. Being one of our chief characteristics made it so for us, for we are a vain crowd, you know," she added rather flippantly. "Mother pays homage at the shrine of father's pedigree because it's the only one in America a generation or two longer than her own. Talk about Chinese ancestor worship!"

"Why shouldn't one be proud of one's descent?" Elaine had asked, the more defensively because she had no family tree of her own. Nor did she grieve now in the memory of the implied lie. Everything within her claimed kinship with these high-bred people.

Roderick's "queerness" was not all inherited temperament. Before long something in his manner when he looked at her, which he did infrequently

and with obvious unwillingness, gave away his secret. He was trying to conquer his love for her. He was afraid of her.

She smiled to herself reminiscently as she thought of it. She did not love him, so she could smile, with a pleasure that partook both of charity and of contempt. On the whole, she liked him, but his moodiness, his priggish conceit, and a certain lack of originality in him tended to irritate her and prevent her from bringing to him the complete trust and respect on which she found it essential to base her ideal love. Yet though at one moment something definitely mean in her hoped he would propose to her so that she might have the satisfaction of rejecting his offer, something else equally mean in her wished that he would propose so that she might accept him—accept a Gravaire and all he stood for.

Well, he had not proposed, and here she was returning home after a flawless week.

Because of the rain, she was not dressed to call on a manager, so she did not carry out her original plan of stopping in to see Littmann on her way, but went straight home.

To her surprise, the sound of her footsteps in the hall did not bring her mother to the door as usual. She had written home what time she might be expected, but as she unlocked her door, she heard no sounds within. She concluded that her mother had gone out in spite of the rain, perhaps to buy some tidbit for lunch to celebrate her home-coming. The thought struck sharply at her heart, yet somehow lighted a spark of impatience in her.

The spark flared brighter as, with the doorknob under her gloved hand, she surveyed the murky, disordered room her mother had left behind her. The folding bed spilled its crumpled contents about with lavish abandon. There were the remains of food on the table, and

a small pitcher lay on its side in a pool of pale-blue milk. The bureau was in a chaotic state, and on the crest of its untidiness rode a hideous heap of gold-colored human hair, tangled up in an untidy pin-cushion. Discarded clothes were tumbled over several chairs, and on one sprawled a soiled pair of corsets.

Suddenly—perhaps it was the sight of the clothes—Elaine caught her breath with her first premonition that something was wrong. She stepped swiftly into the room. Lying out of sight of any one at the door, between the bed and the bureau, was a grotesque heap of distorted humanity.

With a suppressed cry, Elaine cast off her heavy cape and lifted the thin, but singularly heavy, figure in her strong young arms and laid it upon the bed. She knew enough to feel for her mother's pulse, and when she realized that it still was beating, her first impulse was to throw herself upon the flat breast of the unconscious woman and weep her hysterical relief. But training and natural self-control stood her in better stead. She tried a few of the remedies for fainting that she had learned in her college course in hygiene, but found them of no avail, so she gave them up and ran swiftly downstairs to ask Mrs. Sutton, the landlady, to send for a doctor.

She managed to array her mother in a clean bed jacket and to brush the poor, faded hair back neatly before the doctor arrived. He was a bald, rosy, heavily mustached man of middle age, of that school who believe that doctors should demand all trust and no intelligence from their patients. He wrote out prescriptions and used the word "cardiac," with the evident intention of impressing Elaine without enlightening her.

He told her that her mother would recover from this attack, but might expect others. In one of them, even-

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tually, her heart would cease to act. She needed care, good food, fresh air, with no exertion and no worry.

Elaine went out with him to buy the medicine.

"I shall be back to-morrow," he told her as they went down the stoop. "Hadn't I better send you in a nurse?"

"Oh, doctor!" gasped Elaine in dismay. "Can't I attend to her myself? We couldn't afford a nurse."

He looked at her a moment.

"Why don't you send your mother to a hospital?" he asked, not unkindly. "If you object to the public ward, I could get her in a semi-private room, with two or three others sharing the expense of the nurse."

"No, I'll manage," objected Elaine quickly. She knew how deeply her mother detested hospitals. "She'll be so much happier at home."

Her mother was well enough to speak faintly when Elaine got back. She lay, a puzzled, resentful figure, too weak to express properly her disappointment over her behavior at her daughter's home-coming. Mrs. Sutton, who had gone on guard at her bedside with the stern, determined kindness of the overworked, gave Elaine a brief account of her mother's attempt to get up again, so as not to frighten her daughter by apparent illness.

"I tol' her she'd frighten you a lot more if she wuz a corpse when you got back," she concluded succinctly. "It wuz bad enough all week, with her draggin' herself about the place fit to die, an' her all alone."

The full seriousness of the situation came to Elaine some time later, when her mother had dropped into a sound sleep. She thought over the doctor's words. Rest, care, good food, no worry—and what else? At any rate, it was a hopeless prescription.

For one brief instant, Elaine compared her own frail mother with that hardy aristocrat at Clairbridge, Rod-

erick Gravaine's mother, who was Mrs. Harcourt's senior by at least ten years. If only some of the orderly peace that she enjoyed were theirs!

She caught herself dreaming and put a quick stop to it. All her past forbade such soft indulgences. Instead, she hunted out her mother's purse and, with her own in her lap, went through some practical reckoning. She had squandered fifteen dollars on her week of pleasure. She had less than twenty dollars of her salary left. Her mother's whole fortune, apart from her debts, was not quite eight dollars more. There was the doctor's bill to look forward to, and even if she got an engagement immediately, about three weeks of rehearsals with no pay.

There was no time to waste. She put away the money and dressed herself with care. Then she called on Mrs. Sutton to keep watch on her mother again and went out to present herself at the offices of Samuel Littmann.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Elaine had not been around to the managers since she had gone with her mother in the old days. Her last engagement had come through some friend who had been trying to help Mrs. Harcourt. Therefore, her present experience was not without novelty. She looked about her at the anxious faces of her companions and saw in their swift, suspicious glances the expectant humility of dogs waiting to be fed. It hurt her to be one of them, but she salved her pride with the thought that she, at least, had had a definite invitation to come.

"Mr. Littmann is out of town," said the boy in charge of the outer office. His voice was coarse and had an impertinent inflection, and he always spoke for the whole room to hear.

"But he said——" began Elaine.

"Sorry. That don't bring him back. What's the name? Will he know it?"

Elaine drew out a card and scribbled on the back of it.

"You said you wanted to see me," she wrote. "I've come, and the boy says you are out."

The boy took it and read it brazenly.

"Oh, you're Miss Harcourt," he said suavely. "You was to uv come in last Monday. He told me about you. He was expectin' you all last week. He's went to Chicago this week, and he ain't goin' to be back till Friday. Shall I make an appointment for you for then?"

"Is—isn't there some one else I could see?" stammered Elaine despairingly.

"I guess he'd want to see you himself," answered the boy with a familiar shrug. "You'd better wait."

"Next Friday?" hesitated Elaine.

"That's when he'll be back."

Elaine turned away. She could not afford to waste a whole week like that. The idea came to her to try agencies and other managers. It was not unlikely that her criticisms had had an effect on others besides Littmann.

"Well," she said loftily, and drew her cape closer with a regal gesture, "I'm not sure whether I'll be back Friday. I can't really promise to keep myself free for Mr. Littmann."

She started immediately on her round of other managers and left her name with some agencies. The incidents of Littmann's office repeated themselves with little variation and with nothing like the same encouragement, as she continued her quest, day after day, for the rest of the week. Friday morning she went back to Littmann, weak and discouraged. Her mother was now well enough to dismiss the doctor. She scouted his prophecies that she would need him again if she were not more mindful of herself, and rose that morning, dressed herself,

rouged her sunken cheeks into a ghastly parody of health, and declared that, now his visits were over, she was feeling entirely herself again. Elaine's judgment was weakened by worry, and she was glad enough to believe her. Their slim capital could not stand any extravagance in doctor's calls. Yet she was quite sure of Littmann, and she knew that she could ask for an advance on her first week's salary. She expected this to be big enough to tide them with reasonable comfort over the rehearsals.

The office boy recognized her with almost offensive friendliness, but his cheerful "Yeah, this time he's in. You're in luck!" fell upon grateful ears.

In a few minutes she was sitting in Littmann's office, noticing how much stouter and coarser he looked in full daylight, and how much colder and more critical his keen glance had grown as it traveled appraisingly, but with remarkable swiftness, from her hat to her shoes.

"You're too late," he said without preface. "We were going to give you the lead in Warren's show. It was written for Alice Tremaine, but she got her back up over something and refused to go on with it. We wanted to teach her a lesson, but she came back of her own accord. Apologized, and opens in Philadelphia Monday night."

"Next Monday?" Elaine's eyes smarted. Then she flushed indignantly, for she knew of Alice Tremaine's popularity and the drawing power of her name alone. "Yes, but if I'd got it and Miss Tremaine had come back, you wouldn't have hesitated to ship me in her favor."

He shrugged coolly, playing with his paper cutter. She interpreted his silence to mean that he thought the chance to show what she could do would have been worth something.

"Mr. Littmann, please give me another chance."

"Bad time just now, my dear. Nothing going on to speak of."

"Oh, there must be something! I'll take anything. I assure you, I'd consider it a great privilege to take even a small part in one of your companies. Or couldn't I play Miss Tremaine's part on the road?"

His flickering eyelash answered her in the affirmative, but his words were discouraging.

"We're not sending out a road company till we see what the show does in New York," he declared. "But if you want to wait——"

"How long?"

"About the first of April."

She grew pale and bit her lip.

"I can't wait," she replied quietly. "I've got to have work now."

Again he scrutinized her sharply, then reached casually for some papers. His gesture was as much a sign of dismissal as if he had said good-by. She rose. But the vision of the crowded agencies and of her mother's feebleness turned her back from the door, determined not to lose out.

"Mr. Littmann, I'd do a maid's part."

"Are you so hard up?" he asked, with a little smile. There was something awkward about that smile that gave her courage to go on.

"Terribly. You liked my work—you said so," she pleaded.

"Yes, it was good."

"Well, isn't it worth giving me a small part, to keep track of me?"

He paused, then nodded meditatively.

"But you want a full-sized salary with your small part that enables us to keep track of you," he suggested.

"I don't. I'll take anything. I'll take less than I got before," exclaimed Elaine eagerly.

"How much was that?"

"Thirty-five dollars." She was inspired to tell the truth.

He did not look at her; he seemed only half attentive, and rather too steeped in his own affairs, as he again reached for his papers, but the same awkward smile pursed his lips and played faintly about the outer corners of his eyes.

"Report at the Orpheum Theater Monday morning at ten-thirty for rehearsal. Ask for me if you don't see me, and, mind you, no kicking if you find your part is only a couple of sides," he said.

She clenched her hands to check her hysterical delight, and after briefly thanking him, went out past the office boy, who, judging by her starry eyes, believed that she had been converted into leading lady at the very least.

The streets themselves looked different to her as she hurried home, hugging her good news. A week ago, the old salary would have seemed paltry to her, but now she was uplifted to think that she was going to act—for something less. She ran up the stoop and down the hollow-sounding hall and threw open the door, which was kept unlocked since her mother's illness. Then she stood on the threshold, staring, amazement and horror contesting with each other for precedence in her face.

Her mother, bedizened with paint and cosmetics, her false hair actually rowdy in the rakish carelessness with which it had been pinned on, clad in a gay, cheap silk wrapper of some former period, its lace and ribbons dingy and creased, sat chattering vivaciously with a slim, dark youth, the lift of whose chin was the epitome of haughty reserve.

"Here's Elaine now!" cried her mother in delight. "This is Mr. Gravaine, child. Don't you recognize him?"

Elaine, half stunned, bowed constrainedly. For the first time, she faced

the gap that lay between her and the things she desired most in life.

"I inquired at the Marlborough for you, and, strangely enough, they weren't able to give me any information. Then I asked at the theater where you played before, and they sent me here." He spoke smoothly.

"Yes," said Elaine huskily. "You've met my mother?"

"Yes." He inclined his head toward that person courteously. "I'm sorry to hear from her that she's been ill."

"I was telling him, dearie, how I don't trust doctors," chirped her mother. "I feel so much better now since mine don't come any more."

"Was—did—did you want to see me specially—or—was this just a visit?" asked Elaine, breaking an excruciating lull.

"A visit," answered Roderick vaguely. He kept his eyes averted, and she noticed swiftly his pallor, the quiver of his nostril, and the slight tremor of the hand that held his hat and stick.

"I'm sorry I was out. I've just succeeded in seeing a manager and getting an engagement." She spoke against silence.

"Oh, Elaine!" shrieked her mother, and fell back in her chair, trembling with excitement. "That dear Littmann! I'm so glad! I could hug him!"

Roderick's chin was raised, and drawn in a little more.

"It's a very small part, mammy, with a very small salary, but it's something."

"Small?" Some of her mother's delight melted.

"I must go," interposed Roderick suddenly. "I had hoped—you would come to lunch with me, but I see you want to be with your mother, to share your good news with her. Perhaps another time. Good-by."

He bent slightly over Mrs. Harcourt's hand and over Elaine's, still

without meeting the latter's glance. Through her glove, Elaine felt his bared hand icy cold. She went with him to the front door, but neither said anything beside the conventional, supplementary "Good-by."

## CHAPTER IX.

For two months, Elaine played her little part in Littmann's play. It was not a maid's part, and it was four sides, but for an ambitious actress this is nothing. The play had been rehearsing two weeks when she went into it, so she was soon acting and drawing her salary. Her joy that first Saturday night, when she found that "less" than her former salary was really five dollars more, would have satisfied Littmann had he seen it. It was a small enough bit of generosity. Some said of him that it was merely part of his business methods to cultivate gratitude, but on the whole it was delicately done and it was for such things that he was trusted and well liked.

He had an agreeable habit, too, of remembering his promises. In the middle of March, the road company went into rehearsal of "With the Tide," Alice Tremaine's play. Littmann gave Elaine her chance in it, and arranged that she need not lose a day's acting while she was rehearsing. Her salary jumped to a hundred dollars a week. With this money, she rented a tiny apartment for her mother, and secured a maid for her. She wanted her mother to go to a private hospital for the summer, instead, but the idea was so repugnant to Mrs. Harcourt, and the little apartment had taken so deep a hold on her fancy, that Elaine gave in to her.

One hot day in July, the inevitable occurred. Mrs. Harcourt was stricken with a bad heart attack. Elaine was telegraphed for, and came on from Cincinnati. Following the doctor's

command, she broke up her housekeeping, dismissed the maid, and saw her mother established in an excellent sanatorium. She lost nearly a week's acting this way, but Littmann was sympathetic.

In the beginning of August, the road company was disbanded. Littmann, however, spoke of having another part in view for Elaine in September. She had lived with economy on the road and had managed to save, so she procured a cheap room for herself, not far from the sanatorium in which her mother was being cared for.

Mrs. Harcourt did not recover properly from her second attack. The poor little woman battled feebly through a very hot spell in August, and then one evening, as Elaine sat beside her reading aloud from a theatrical weekly, she sighed her last so quietly that Elaine had been reading to the deaf ears of the dead some minutes before she realized what had happened.

She was overwhelmed by the suddenness of her bereavement, and overcome by the vastness of her loneliness. Death taught her what life had concealed from her so mercifully—that she had never really loved her mother. Her grief was profitless regret. As often happens, she sorrowed less for her own loss than for what the dead had lost in dying, and for what the dead had missed in life.

"Shabby from start to finish," she whispered to herself, choking back a sob. "My poor, poor little mammy! All her gold was tinsel—even me!"

The horror of her mother's funeral haunted her. It took place from public parlors, and to it came a few people who had known her mother on the stage, kind-hearted, sincere, shallow folk, who wept readily at the sight of the stranger in the casket, whom they could not have identified unaided.

Elaine had had a hard summer of nervous strain, undernourishment, and

feverish travel. It was only natural that she should break down. Littmann, who had advanced money to pay for the funeral, did all he could for her now. He visited her once, spending three minutes of his precious time at her bedside in the hospital. Another time he sent flowers to her. But he could not be expected to hold up the opening of his new play on her account. In September, after a miserable week in bed, she read in the paper of rehearsals begun on Sam Littmann's newest production, "The Gift Horse." "In the cast will be——" and so forth. She cried low-spiritedly and had visions of never getting well again.

Then came a letter from Ethel Burroughs, forwarded by Littmann. Ethel had not seen Elaine since one brief glimpse of her when she had been playing her small part in Littmann's company in New York. They had exchanged but two letters, but the news of her friend's trouble, of which she had just heard, had kindled all Ethel's latent affection and interest.

"What are you doing? Where are you? Are you all alone? Couldn't you come to me for a while until you are settled? My mother would be so glad to do anything for you to lighten your sorrow."

So wrote Ethel from her big, quiet house in New York, only a mile or two from the cold, clean, busy public ward in the hospital, where Elaine lay.

The blithe pride which had walked her through the snow in satin slippers was gone now. Elaine wrote in a shaken, quivering hand and told her friend how it was with her. The next day brought Ethel to the hospital, and the day after the Burroughs' coupé drove up to carry Elaine to the comfort and privacy of a real home.

"I understand now why mother hated hospitals," said Elaine to Ethel, but could no more explain further than her

mother could. In many ways she understood her mother better now; she was closer to her than she had ever been in life.

Mrs. Burroughs' motherliness had an indefinable quality, something both warm and yet to some degree unapproachable. There was dignity in her affection, even for Ethel, her youngest child. It had a soothing effect upon the tired Elaine, whose overstrung nerves would have responded painfully to anything more emotional. She liked to lie relaxed in the big bed, conscious of the beautiful lines of her room, the long, straight folds of the curtains, the spare, well-proportioned pictures, the mantel with its large, simple ornaments. It gave her the sense of both space and peacefulness. The quiet servants who came in at intervals might have been part of the furniture rather than human entities. Ethel, young, warm-hearted, and exuberant, completed the charm.

Almost hourly, Elaine grew better. In three days she was up, clad in a soft black silk dress that was a gift from Mrs. Burroughs. The gold of her hair, the whiteness of her skin, the shadowed depths of her dark-blue eyes, her ethereal slimness, were all enhanced by the somber simplicity of her mourning. Even Mr. Burroughs, a silent, unobservant man, noticed and remarked on her beauty after she had left them that night to go to bed.

Ethel walked with a sort of glowing triumph as if she herself were being praised. She sent her mother a swift, secret glance.

"I hope she'll be as beautiful to-morrow night," she said.

She did not tell Elaine next day that they were to have a dinner guest, nor, apparently, had she warned the guest of Elaine's presence. She had spoken very little to Elaine about the Gravaines, divining from Elaine's own reticence that there was something un-

desirable in the subject. But she had been one of the first to note Roderick's former interest in her friend, and was romantically anxious to see it ripen.

She watched them both when Elaine came unobtrusively and unexpectedly into the room. She saw Roderick rise and grow pale, staring as if some outside force were focusing his eyes on Elaine against his will. Elaine stopped at the door and drew back a little. The ghost of a little cockney woman, plastered with rouge, grotesque in half-soiled silk and lace and ribbons, seemed to stand relentlessly between them.

At last they moved slowly toward each other, greeting each other like two people but distantly acquainted. Elaine extended her thin hand with an indistinct murmur. Roderick bowed over it in silence, and the formality seemed to release him from his spell.

"I am sorry to see—you—you have had trouble," he said, with just the right modulation of sympathy in his voice.

"My mother," answered Elaine.

Ethel, listening, noted an astonishing bitterness in her tone.

"Accept my sympathy." He flushed slightly, and turned from her.

Their constraint convinced Ethel that there had been something between them—that Roderick had proposed and been rejected. For Elaine seemed more at ease than he was, in spite of his usual poise.

Elaine, in fact, was letting herself float along on unanalyzed sensations, mostly pleasurable, as is the habit of happy convalescents. Never more than usually introspective, she did not try to fathom now the reasons for many quaint reactions at the sight of Roderick. She did not hate or despise him for having abruptly gone out of her life, frightened by the sight of her mother—the stock from which she came. She remembered Mrs. Hale's



ironical description of the "Chinese ancestor worship" of the Gravaines.

When dinner was over, Ethel contrived to leave them alone together in the music room.

"You have been ill," Roderick said after a slight pause, moving toward her and speaking in a lowered voice in which she could detect an unwonted unsteadiness.

"Yes," she answered.

"What was the matter?"

"Overwork—and not eating enough."

"Not eating——" He caught his breath. "You don't mean you couldn't afford——"

"No, no—I had a part all summer, and good pay." She smiled almost drowsily; she liked the glint that had come into his eyes, and the convulsive rigidity of his body at the thought of her poverty.

"Was it worry about your mother?" he asked at length.

"Partly."

He was silent and awkward, as if once more the ugly memory of her mother intruded between them. Then he spoke impulsively:

"May I come—to see you again?"

"You are visiting Ethel."

"I'd like to call on you."

"Soon I shall be going back to work."

"Acting?"

"As soon as Mr. Littmann finds me a part."

"But——" He stopped abruptly. His sensitiveness to the approach of other people amounted to a talent.

Ethel appeared at the door.

"Elaine, are you too tired to sing us one of Roderick's songs? Just one for mother to hear, now that Roderick himself is here to accompany you."

"I haven't the notes," objected Roderick.

"I have. Louise sent me a copy of my favorite—'Eyes, Calm Beside Thee.'" Ethel began to look through the music in the cabinet.

"I don't remember that one," said Elaine.

"I don't think you saw it. It's one Roderick wrote lately," answered Ethel.

"I should like to sing it," declared Elaine.

"It's Browning at his youngest," commented Roderick immovably. "The music does not improve it. But if you want to sing, I shall be glad to play."

She stood above him at the piano, watching the bend and turn of his head and the tense power of his slim fingers on the keys. Something about his proximity, the knowledge of the secret he fought so passionately to hide, exhilarated and inspired her. She sang well.

## CHAPTER X.

Three days afterward, a letter came from Littmann asking Elaine, if she were well enough to work, to call at his offices in regard to a part in a new comedy. At first Ethel begged her friend not to consider this offer, but Elaine, whose pride had sprouted again with the gradual return of her health, could not permit herself to acquiesce in an indefinite extension of her visit. Moreover, she was afraid of offending Littmann and losing his interest and friendship.

"I'll go down and see what the part is like," she compromised at last. "I needn't feel I have to take it. But, Ethel dear, I must look forward, you know."

"Let me do that for you," answered Ethel enigmatically.

"What do you mean?" Elaine looked at her sharply, and Ethel flushed.

"I mean—you—you must get strong first—good and strong. I don't think you ought to act at all. The work's too hard."

"You're a dear, Ethel," smiled Elaine. "But you must leave the mold-

ing of my destiny to me. And perhaps," she added lightly, "to Mr. Littmann."

She went down to Littmann's office in the Burroughs' coupé. She leaned back on the soft cushions and pretended that it was her carriage, that she was an actress like Alice Tremaine, for example, who had arrived and could live luxuriously.

Then her imagination clouded. She had heard stories of Alice Tremaine, gossip that accounted for much of her wealth. An actress' life is hard, and her expenses are high. She must indeed be of the first rank to be able to afford the rich surroundings Elaine coveted so—the house like Ethel's, the secure sense of having no debts and no need for a struggle for means to continue. Elaine closed her eyes wearily. Her present drifting and dependence seemed a thousandfold more desirable now that she was fighting to relinquish them.

Nor was she likely to see much of Roderick Gravaine when she left Ethel.

This awakened the old question: What relation had her feelings toward him to the love she felt so necessary to marriage? Before she could answer it, the coupé had stopped, and the footman stood at the open door.

The office boy did not wait to ask her her business.

"Just a minute, Miss Harcourt," he said. "Mr. Littmann'll be free in a second. I'll tell him you're here."

The usual crowd of applicants were in the office. At this, some of them whispered together. One of the women, middle-aged and dressed in shabby finery, sighed. It depressed Elaine unspeakably.

As she entered his office, Littmann's swift glance became arrested and a little startled. She was wearing a long black cloak of Mrs. Burroughs', as the weather had grown somewhat colder. On her head was a small hat, and from

it her heavy veil, which she had thrown back, formed an effective background for her pale face and gleaming hair.

Littmann did the impossible. He arose politely and pulled forward a chair.

"Sit down, my dear," he said genially. "So you're going to get back to the grind, hey?"

"Yes," answered Elaine without animation, seating herself. "I have to work, Mr. Littmann."

"Most of us do," he answered lightly. "Here's the play I spoke of. Want to look it over? It's called 'Four To One.' I thought you'd be good as *Isabelle*. It has a sort of double female lead—*Isabelle* and *Mary*. I'm getting Grace Carter for *Mary*."

Elaine listlessly glanced at the typed manuscript in her hand. Suddenly merely "looking it over" seemed an intolerable burden. The pages blurred before her eyes, and two big tears rolled down her cheeks. Littmann saw them, though she lowered her head to hide them. In an instant, he was beside her, patting her shoulder and holding her close against him with rough tenderness.

"Now, old girl," he soothed her, "brace up. The sooner you're back in harness, the easier it will be. We've all gone through it, and it seems a heartless game, but in the end it's the best. You get away from yourself this way."

"It's not that," Elaine controlled herself. "You're very kind, Mr. Littmann."

He gave her a final pat and walked to the window. He had his own peculiar and sophisticated code of chivalry. One of its laws was always to give a lady a chance to "mop up" unobserved after weeping.

"It's not that you're sick still, is it, dear?" He seemed enormously interested in a wind-swept billboard on a level with the window.

"No, sir."

"Then where's the enthusiasm of the little girl who blew in here six months ago begging for the privilege of a maid's part in one of my companies?"

"I don't know, sir. Somehow I don't want to act any more."

"In love?" He looked at her.

"I?" She blushed vividly. "I don't know."

"Love's all right, but I hope you're not thinking of marrying," he advised sternly after a pause.

She remained silent. He crossed to his desk and sat down. There was an exasperated pucker about his eyes.

"See here, dear, here's some straight talk. You've got the makings of a great actress in you. As you stood in that door, I was tempted to turn you into a tragedy queen, though you're a fine comedienne, and there's more money in that. You're young, but that's to your advantage. These are the years for hard work, and pray God for a slow success—slow and solid. You come of good stock. Helena Harcourt was a great specimen of her day. She was killed artistically by cheapening her art for vaudeville. It was because I liked her work, bad as it got to be, that I trained my weather eye on you. Good stock, I'm telling you—and that counts."

Elaine sat staring at him, her big blue eyes, with their reddish-violet shadows, wider and more beautiful than ever in her astonishment.

"My mother?" she repeated.

"Live up to her memory, my dear. It's the only thing you can do for her now. Be worthy of her."

"Do you know how my mother died? And was buried?" she asked bitterly.

He rapped upon the table sharply in a quick, short outburst of temper.

"Do you know how Rembrandt died and was buried?" he demanded. "Good Lord—it's how you *live* that matters! Most every one of us gets a decent fu-

neral. What distinction is there in that?"

"You're right." She rose wearily. "You are so nice to me. I shall be worthy of it. May I take the script home with me?"

"Certainly."

"I'll return it to-morrow, and I'll let you know surely then."

"You're getting soft. But that's no way to happiness. Get through your day's work. It's the only way. We start rehearsals Monday."

She braced herself against heartache at the definiteness of the date. She tried dizzily to reckon how many days of respite she still had.

"This is Thursday," she murmured.

He smiled as he took her hand.

"I've seen them as sick of the job as you are, and yet, sooner or later, the time comes when they pine to be back. Take your chance while you can. I'll treat you white. You trust me, don't you, dear?"

"Oh, surely, surely."

"Then"—he put his stubby fingers under her chin and lifted her face so as to make her look squarely into his dark, prominent eyes—"for God's sake, don't marry!"

She went out in a daze, remembering his advice, connecting it with the coarse flashiness of his face and dress and the repellent good-nature of his smile.

When she got home, she found Roderick Gravaine having tea with Ethel. She trailed into the room with a gracefully flagging step, the pale-blue roll of manuscript under her arm.

Ethel rang for fresh tea and coddled and fussed over her delightfully, then, professing to have something important to say to her mother, excused herself and left them alone together.

"So you are going back to the stage," said Roderick, when she had gone.

"Yes—Monday."

"Are you glad?"

"No." She did not trouble to supplement the negative.

He devoted himself to crushing his transparent hands together, and for a few minutes was lost to all else.

"What sort of a man is this—Littmann?" he asked finally.

"Littmann?" She raised her brows. "Kind and trustworthy—but not charming."

"What makes you put it that way?"

"Because I've seen him. You couldn't mistake him for a gentleman," she answered pensively. "But he is wonderfully good and charitable. When mother died—" She broke off. "I don't know what would have happened if he hadn't helped me."

"He—he loaned you money?"

"For the funeral—yes."

He rose and walked abruptly away from her. She saw in the act a repetition of the disgust the sight of her mother had caused him, which the shadow of her mother still fostered. It seemed to her, as she lay back limply in the chair, weakened by the fatigue of her interview with Littmann, that never had she been closer to experiencing that love she dreamed of. All her tired soul cried out in agony to that other tortured soul, who so longed for her, yet sought so passionately to renounce her.

"Do you love him?" asked an unfamiliar, breathless voice at the window.

"Who?" Her startled eyes flew open.

"This—Littmann."

"Littmann?" she repeated in great astonishment. "Of course not."

"Yet you would—" He did not seem able to finish.

"You think that—of me?" she demanded after a long pause.

Her voice was very quiet and colorless. She wondered for a second why she was not deeply wounded, why she did not despise him for his implication.

Then, strangely enough, her thoughts leaped to Alice Tremaine. She speculated quite coolly that there was something besides marriage. Why didn't Roderick offer her that? And if he did—would she accept it? Her own spontaneous shudder of utter repugnance answered her.

The convulsive motion of her shoulders, the trembling sigh, caught his attention. With an unconsciously significant gesture, he threw out his hands and came toward her like one drugged.

"Elaine," he gasped at length, "I believe you. I want to believe you—"

She gripped the arms of her chair, and her face hardened. In that moment she hated him, as he seemed to descend to her, godlike, offering her his faith in her as if it were her salvation. But the next instant, she realized how she had misread him.

"I can't live without my belief in you! You are everything to me! I did not know love was so powerful, so cruel and lasting! Every moment since the day I met you, you have possessed my thoughts. Everything but you is trivial. It is only you I want and need. Marry me and make me whole!"

Elaine rose from her chair in a wild, inexplicable panic. Instantly he had caught her in his fierce embrace. For a moment she struggled futilely; then, lost in a delicious enervation, she dropped half swooning in his arms.

Somewhere, miles away through the sound of rushing waters, there came to her roaring ears Littmann's terrified warning: "For God's sake, don't marry!"

## CHAPTER XI.

There began for Elaine a new era, so distantly removed from any she had known that when Ethel suggested that her trousseau dresses should only hint at mourning in their tones of gray, violet, and white, it seemed to her quite

proper. Her mother seemed to have died so long ago.

The wedding was to be in January. The Burroughs insisted on Elaine's remaining with them and arranged that the ceremony should take place under their roof. Elaine allowed herself to be swayed by them completely. She cast herself drifting upon the tide of their genial generosity. She stifled every scruple within herself and every independent thought. When Mrs. Burroughs assumed the motherly right to provide her with her trousseau as well, her protests were weak and insincere. In her defense, it must be argued that she did not know in advance Mrs. Burroughs' definition of a trousseau. She was both appalled and seduced by its extravagance when she began to learn. Ethel chose most of it, becoming as excited and absorbed in her task as a little girl buying clothes for her pet doll.

Elaine followed the energetic Ethel from one splendid shop to another. At first she was too dazed and grateful to do anything but enjoy the mirrored visions of herself dressed in endlessly varying finery, but the habit of wearing rich clothes is an easy one for a young and beautiful woman to acquire. She was soon courageous enough to exercise her own taste in the choice of her clothes.

"It isn't as if I couldn't have earned them for myself," she would muse. She used this excuse for keeping her self-respect intact.

And then her mind would reflect uneasily upon a slight incident that, two days after her betrothal, had painfully pierced the lethargic happiness into which she had fallen. She had sent the script of Littmann's play back to him that morning without even bothering to read it. She had inclosed a note with it.

DEAR MR. LITTMANN: I am returning your play. I have a far better engagement—for

life. I am going to marry Mr. Roderick Gravaïne. Won't you wish me joy and success?

Thank you for all your past kindness.

Roderick had asked to see what was written, and she had read it through slowly.

"All right?" she had asked.

For answer, he had embraced her.

Littmann had answered her letter with a little note which annoyed her, it being as brutal and concise as his worst set of manners:

DEAR ELAINE: I am sorry. If ever you are, too, remember your sincere friend,  
SAMUEL LITTMANN.

She had wanted to conceal it from Roderick, but Ethel had seen Littmann's official letterhead, and Elaine, who was naturally truthful and frank, had scorned to warn her not to mention it. Once Ethel had spoken of it, she had thought it better to let him read it and had showed it to him as a rather coarse and clumsy joke. He had surprised her by objecting to what she had completely overlooked.

"You never told me he calls you Elaine."

"Oh—well"—she had tried to see if he were jesting—"why—that—that's—fatherly. They all do—managers," she had added quickly, recalling the fact with sudden wonder at it. "Every manager I ever knew called my mother Helena."

The utter rigidity of his body at this had showed that the explanation was the reverse of satisfactory. A tremor of anger had shot through her, heavily, like a charge of electricity. She had mastered it, but her voice had been cold as she had gone on:

"There is no time for 'Miss' and 'Mrs.' when you're directing a play, and if you have to call down an actress, it helps her to feel that the director is at least friendly about it. In other words, it assures you of the manager's interest."

Roderick had remained staring at the offending note. She had shrugged and moved away from him, her anger growing into indignant contempt. Unconsciously she had begun to twist her handsome engagement ring with the long, nervous fingers of her right hand. Inwardly, she had kept telling herself that it was only amusing that Roderick should be jealous of Littmann—fat, coarse Littmann! She had sought Ethel in the other room, leaving Roderick to himself and afraid to analyze a suffocating heaviness that had fallen upon her heart.

A little later, Roderick had joined them. He had apparently quite got over his anger and seemed to have forgotten it completely. It had alienated Elaine still more that he had evidently conceived her to have forgotten it, too.

Ethel always saw to it that their good-bys were in private, and this evening had been no exception, in spite of some efforts of Elaine to prevent her leaving them alone together. But later she had been glad. As he was about to go, Roderick had drawn the letter from his pocket and handed it to her. His face had been drawn and colorless. He had seemed to want to speak, but could not. She had received the letter silently and dropped it indifferently on the table beside her. He had taken her hand gently in both of his and raised it to his lips, and for a second she had beheld the profound misery in his eyes. The sight had melted her and, smiling, she had touched his hair. She had heard his heavy, difficult breathing as he had pressed her to his heart.

One other incident that made a strong impression on her happened about a week before her wedding. She had been downtown shopping as usual, and had left Ethel to meet Roderick for afternoon tea. She was early and went to the dressing room to arrange her hair. As she looked in the glass,

a warm thrill of satisfaction coursed through her. She was wearing some of the clothes the Burroughs had given her, among other things a soft fur scarf. Her mourning already budded with white at her throat and wrists, with a delicate, long gold-and-pearl chain about her neck, Roderick's gift. She thought with satisfaction that Mrs. Hale and her friends would recognize her easily as one of their set, and would be glad to greet her cordially should they meet her by accident anywhere.

Suppose, she reflected, with an amused flicker in her eye, she had the taste of that woman seated in the chair by the window, the accepted type of the *nouveau riche*. She noted the crowded plumes on the other's awkward hat, the conspicuous ermine collar, the lines of the expensive, overtrimmed velvet suit, and the unsuitably gorgeous jewelry.

Then she became aware that the object of her gaze was staring back at her. She gave her hair and hat a final pat and turned from the mirror. As she did so, to her consternation, she saw the overdressed woman rise with an inarticulate exclamation and come toward her. Through the paint on her features and the elaborately coiffed, dyed Titian hair, she recognized Carrie Ingersoll.

"Well, well!" cried Miss Ingersoll. "I didn't believe it was you! Lord, but you look like a swell!"

It was plain that she was leading Elaine to return the compliment, nor did Elaine fail her.

"I?" She smiled, regaining control over herself and speaking with friendly sympathy. "It's you who are the swell, Carrie Ingersoll. You look terribly prosperous! Has some manager fallen in love with you and starred you?"

Miss Ingersoll jerked back her head with exaggerated coyness, but did not meet Elaine's eye.



"Oh, I'm not starred yet," she giggled nervously.

"But you must have a wonderful part, to be looking like this. And in the city at last! What show? I'd love to see you."

"Well, nothing just now. I was on the road—lead in the third company of that farce of Ridgeway's, 'Who's Upstairs?' Did you see it? It was in New York three years ago. Grace Carter played it. Kinder silly, but good lines. Oh, but the road is hellish for me—you know that. And then I went and got sick out in Pittsburgh! I thought for a while of ending it all," she concluded with easy confidentiality, "but I didn't. I guess you have to be completely down and out to do that. When I felt better, things began to pick up."

"You found another engagement?"

"Yes."

"And a good one, if this—this opulence is the result," smiled Elaine, wondering at the other's reticence and the sly look that crept into her eyes.

"It was a good one. And you look well fixed, too. Only I heard your mother died. Too bad. Was it kinder sudden or what?"

"No, she had been ill all summer."

"I suppose she left insurance?" This was not mercenary heartlessness; it was the genuine interest of one member of a precarious profession for another.

"No," answered Elaine, trying not to resent her curiosity.

"Oh, then it's easy to see you've got a job. Some one was telling me you're in right with Littmann. Is that so?"

"He gave me several chances. I played Tremaine's part in 'With the Tide' on the road. But I'm not playing at all now. I've left the stage."

Miss Ingersoll stared at her with strange intensity for a moment, and Elaine mistook her expression for astonishment.

"That's queer," said Miss Ingersoll at last. "I never thought you'd give up."

"I never would have, only the right man came along," said Elaine lightly.

"Man?" repeated Carrie stupidly.

"Do you remember those fine friends that came to see us at the Siddons? He's one of those. Oh, very swell!" she added with playful boastfulness.

"You mean——" Carrie swallowed hard, and her eyes watered. "Listen," she said with eager contrition. "I didn't dare tell you before, but that's—that's where I'm at, too. I found him in Pittsburgh. Not much to look at, but rich as Cræsus. And real generous, too."

"You mean you're engaged, too? Oh, Carrie, I *am* glad!"

"Well, if you call it engaged."

"What do you mean?" Elaine wilted at the implication. "You—you're not——"

"He's got one wife already, or I guess it would be wedding bells for us. Wouldn't you say he kind of liked me?" She gestured to her finery. "He gave me everything I have on."

"Oh, I—— Yes." Elaine's voice trembled with repugnance, and Carrie heard the change in it.

"Why," she began, "I thought you meant——"

"I'm going to marry Mr. Gravaine," explained Elaine, fighting the apologetic pity that rose in her for her less fortunate sister.

"Marry? Say, that's great!" Carrie spoke absently; then she added in a voice husky with hysterical shame, "I never would have told you, only I thought—— And don't be too hard on me for thinking—— You don't know what it is to be so hopeless and desperate. Gee, you'd do anything! I never was up against it like that before—no place to sleep. Oh, you can do without eats for a long time, but God help you if you can't find a roof

over your head! I guess I lost my nerve. And he is kind, honest. I like him, I do like him a lot, and he can be sure of me. That's more than men can say of lots of women. I've met a bunch of that kind lately, and some with real honest-to-God wedding rings on, too. Well, there's decency in that, too, if you want to make it. And after all, it ain't—well, it might be worse. He'd marry me to-morrow if he was free, and I am fond of him, really. It ain't all bluff."

"You're quite right. I'm sure it isn't. I understand," Elaine murmured at intervals, but they both knew that they were no longer on the same plane.

"I mustn't keep him waiting. He hates to wait," confided Carrie with false coquetry. "So good-by. And good luck to you. I'll look for your name in the society notes. What is it again?"

"Roderick Gravaine."

"Mrs. Roderick Gravaine, of New York."

"No, of Clairbridge, New Jersey."

"Well, that's nearer New York than Pittsburgh, and of course I live back there except for these trips. My luck! Me that hates the road and jay towns! Oh, maybe some day I'll land here for good, if it's only to be buried in Brooklyn! Good-by."

A few minutes later, Elaine found Roderick waiting for her in the corridor. He was always punctual, and she had managed to be fifteen minutes late, but he said nothing about it.

As they crossed the dining room, they passed the table at which Carrie Ingersoll was sitting with a red-faced, fishy-eyed, stout, gray-haired man. Elaine bowed to Carrie as she went by, and when they were seated, Roderick remarked on it.

"Surely you made a mistake, Elaine. You can't know that woman. She doesn't look even—well, she doesn't look respectable."

"She's as respectable as I am," Elaine answered, in a fleeting burst of temper. The next minute her mind began to juggle with the implication. She suppressed her thoughts, but she had awakened a little devil in her brain, and he never absolutely slumbered again.

## CHAPTER XII.

Elaine was married on the twenty-second of January.

The wedding was a very small and quiet affair, in deference to her mourning, but Mrs. Burroughs and Ethel contrived that it should not be lacking in beauty or luxury. The only guests were the Burroughs, the Gravaine family, Harold Farleigh, who was Roderick's best man, and a sprinkling of unimportant elderly relatives. Elaine had not a single guest of her own. Ethel, remarking this, when they sent out the invitations, suggested sending one to Mr. Littmann. Elaine was not enthusiastic, considering Littmann's letter, and perhaps with some hidden hesitancy about exhibiting him among these fine-mannered folk as one of her friends. Ethel innocently enough laid the affair before Roderick.

"Mr. Littmann has been so nice to Elaine," she reasoned.

Roderick's lips hardened.

"The wedding is to be so extremely small and intimate that, unless Elaine feels that Mr. Littmann is a particularly close friend—as close, let us say, as Harold Farleigh is to me—I hardly think it is a good idea. On that basis, do you wish it, Elaine?"

"I? No. Except through what he did for mother, I know Mr. Littmann only professionally," shrugged Elaine, and noticed the color return to Roderick's face, her first intimation that he had paled. It amazed her that he was still jealous of Littmann, and it hurt her pride.

"I only meant," stammered Ethel,

"that since Elaine has no friends at all present——"

"I know no one I care for except those we have already invited," Elaine assured her.

Ethel looked a little distressed and said no more, but Elaine was not pained in the least by the incident. On the contrary, she was apt to be proud of it, snobbishly reckoning that she had not been in the sphere where she would encounter her equals, those to whom she could give both affection and respect, until now.

"I wasn't their kind," she summed it up smugly to herself.

In spite of its privacy, an announcement of the wedding found its way into the society columns of the papers. Elaine and Roderick were going to Europe on their honeymoon, and when they returned from the preliminary three-day wedding trip, Elaine found an unexpected gift, a handsome, but too-elaborate feather fan, from Carrie Ingersoll. She smiled at it a bit wryly. It suggested the overdressed Carrie somehow, and she was ashamed of the way Roderick raised his fine eyebrows and said, "Delightful." And this was the only gift she did not owe either to Ethel or to her husband. She was too happy at the time to think of this as anything but an amusing commentary on her past life.

For she was happy, and not the least part of her happiness was the thought that she had begun to love Roderick, the source of it all. She never doubted that her grateful affection touched with admiration was love. She was proud of his aloof hauteur. It flattered her to realize that she alone had the power to reduce him to humility and tenderness. She thrilled exultantly at the knowledge that a moment's unexpected caress of her hand on his sleeve softened the disdainful mask that was his face, and brought to his firm, thin lips a quiver of agonized joy.

Because of her delight in traveling, they stayed in Europe a year, though Roderick had planned to return early that summer for his mother's sake. They went first to the Riviera, to Monte Carlo, Rome, Venice, Milan, and through Switzerland to Paris, in time to see spring light the candles on the horse-chestnut trees; then to England, to spend week-ends with friends of Roderick's in unbelievably old manors with gardens like fairy tales; thence to Holland and through Germany, with its quaint, neat old towns, that looked as if they belonged in a box with the rest of the German toys; to Berlin, too conscious of her superiority; to Vienna; and, driven by the approaching bad weather of autumn, back to southern Italy and France.

The luxury of this aimless wandering, the heedless expenditures on comforts, amusement, or sheer whimsy, drugged and intoxicated Elaine. She was young, healthy, and wholesome-minded. She had enthusiasm and energy. She enjoyed everything so completely that he whose every heartbeat was attuned to hers mellowed and rejoiced with her. Roderick became a romantic figure. She began to realize his youth, and to believe that much of his former unresponsiveness had been the stiffness of a man who, while still a boy, had been forced by circumstances into a position of dignity and importance as head of his family. She told him that he reminded her of a young king traveling incognito, free of his responsibilities, and she interpreted the pleasure with which he accepted this fancy of hers as a further proof of his latent boyishness.

He did unexpected and delightful things. He contrived little surprises for her. There was generally a basket of fruit or a box of flowers or candy awaiting her at every hotel they came to, telegraphed for in advance by him. On their winter stop in Paris, their last

in any big city, she was greeted upon her arrival in her rooms with a sable wrap such as she had never dreamed of possessing. If she admired a jewel anywhere, she was likely to find it in her hand bag or her dresser drawer, where he had slipped it.

Once only during that whole blissful year had she a moment's vision of future clouds. It was at Monte Carlo, at the very beginning of their trip. She found a franc piece in the corridor of the hotel and playfully ventured it at the roulette tables, where it multiplied in half an hour to seven hundred and twenty francs. After assuring herself with the odd twenty francs that luck was turning against her, she ceased to risk the remainder of what she had won.

Roderick, for the first time since their marriage, indulged in one of his fits of disapproval.

"But, darling, one plays to play, not to win," he told her protestingly.

"I played to win! Think—it's almost a hundred and forty dollars! And I made it all out of twenty cents!" she exclaimed exultantly. "I shall buy myself something with it to-morrow."

"What are you going to buy?" he asked quickly.

"I don't know. Something silly and useless."

"Tell me, and let me get it for you, whatever it is, please, dear. And let's go back and lose this at the tables—every last sou of it. Do, my darling, for my sake!"

"Why, Roddy!" She gazed at him astonished, unable to believe that he was serious. "Just to throw away seven hundred francs? Why?"

"You don't need them, dear. Don't I give you everything you want? If there's anything you want to buy for yourself, let me give you the money for it. Oh, my darling, if I thought I had stunted you in any way—to make you care for this miserable seven hundred

francs—I should be heartbroken with shame!"

"Shame? I don't understand." She began to look grave. "Do you think it ignoble of me to be glad I have won money?"

"No, of course not—be glad you have won it if you like, but then—lose it, give it away to charity. Don't use it."

"You have won money at roulette, and you haven't hesitated to use it. When you made that three thousand francs, you bought me this ring. Won't you let me buy something for you out of the money I have made?"

"You've given me yourself. All gifts are cheap in comparison. My own, my own soul!"

He took her hands and tried to draw her to him, but for the first time since their marriage, she pushed away from him, frightened by the gloating intensity of his gaze. Did he in truth own her so completely?

"Let me go!" she cried hysterically.

He started back with a swift, sharp intake of his breath, as if she had struck him and had hurt. Without an instant's hesitation, he released her hands and turned from her. The droop of his shoulders suggested the despair of a man abandoned by his God. It was too much for Elaine.

"Roderick!" she called, with repentant and outstretched hands. "Forgive me! I don't understand you. I wish I deserved you!"

"No, no, you mustn't talk like that!" He again seized her hands and crushed them passionately to his lips. "You're an angel and the light of my life! I love you so I want to give you everything in the world to make up to you for the priceless happiness you give me by being alive and being my wife!"

This time Elaine yielded to his embrace. She thought it unworthy in her that she was unable to respond fully to his devotion. She was inclined to

believe it was because of some mediocrity in her, some middle-class reserve that fettered her. In her penitence and humility, she determined that he should never know of it. She made up her mind to conquer her constraint, to place herself on his level by an ardor that would match his.

Meantime, she was ashamed that, even now under the sacred pressure of their reconciliation kiss, she was thinking that they had not settled what she was to do with the seven hundred francs. To discipline her soul for her pettiness in being able to think of such a thing at such a time, she decided to throw away the money even as he had desired. She looked upon it as her first lesson in spiritual aristocracy.

She found it impossible to broach the subject for the rest of the day, and that evening put the money in the bottom of her jewel box to await an auspicious opening. Before she went to sleep that night, she planned a charming little comedy to be played at the next morning's breakfast table, when she would wave the seven hundred-franc notes at her husband, exclaiming blithely:

"Roderick, we have a hard day's work before us—to lose these!"

But when she had unlocked her jewel case and sat with the large, thin notes in her fingers, something denied her carrying out her plan. Some forgotten ancestor's blood in her, aggressive and obstinate, unexpectedly rebelled and insisted upon showing up the act under its prettiness and whimsicality as timid and servile. She placed the money in an obscure compartment of the jewel box and hastily thrust it back in her drawer.

"Maybe some day I'll grow up to it," was her insincere mental comment.

Roderick seemed to have forgotten all about the incident, for he never mentioned it again. So Elaine traveled everywhere with that hidden money, a

symbol of the independence she had renounced, but could not kill.

### CHAPTER XIII.

They returned to America in January, and celebrated their return and first anniversary at Clairbridge with a formal dinner, followed by a dance. Preparation for the affair and the affair itself filled Elaine's days with pleasant excitement, and she felt her own success and popularity and the full power of her charm and beauty for the first time that night.

"You were splendid, my love," gloated Roderick, when they were alone. "My queen—are you as happy as I am?"

It was a question that did not require to be answered, except by her yielding to his arms. She was a little tired, so her drooping body melted the more readily to his embrace, but, looking under her lowering lids, she saw the gleam in his eyes, and it awakened her to a momentary inquiry. Was she as happy as he was?

Of course. Besides—what difference did it make? She was at least happier than ever in her life before.

Invitations now poured in—theater, opera, dinners, balls, afternoon teas, and musicales. Louise Hale, who had gone about with Elaine, began to drop out of some of the larger and more formal affairs as the season wore on. Louise was expecting her second child in July. Elaine still had Ethel and a host of more superficial, but fascinating new friends besides.

Yet, when Louise dropped out, some of the charm of this mad chase after amusement began to wear off. Elaine wondered if it was always going to be so stereotyped, with the same people, the same sort of dances, the same dinners; even the wines and menu were singularly alike. She wondered

what there was in it all to give other women such a zest to continue it.

She began to hear gossip, and to notice with more insight many of the flirtations going on about her among young married women and men who were not their husbands. Harmless, light-headed, light-hearted little affairs they were, and only one of the many she had detected ever reached the dignity of a scandal. Were the men and women of this vapid world driven into this by boredom, or, and the thought revolted her, was their social life based on these exciting irregularities? Were these brilliant, complex, almost ritualistic ceremonies provided merely as opportunities for philandering?

At the end of May, Ethel Burroughs went to Europe with her father and mother. Roderick and Elaine went down to the steamer to see them off, for the Burroughs claimed a sort of foster-kinship with Elaine, to which she readily and willingly adapted herself.

As Elaine mounted the steep gang-plank to the steamer's deck, she beheld leaning against the rail an ungainly figure in a blatantly suitable set of tweeds, the rough, well-fitting coat and the correctly plaided cap labeling themselves "traveling costume" and making conspicuous the physical drawbacks of the model they adorned. He saw her coming toward him. She noted his glance drop from her fine straw hat, pause at the diamonds half hidden in her lace jabot, then descend swiftly to her expensive shoes. His interest alone betrayed his recognition of her, and something between gratitude and pique made her determine to speak with him.

"Mr. Littmann." She held out her hand. "You remember me? Elaine Harcourt?"

He took her hand with a sort of genial indifference.

"Of course, girl. How have you been?"

"Splendid."

"Are you coming across with us?"

"I've not much more than returned from Europe. I'd like you to meet my husband, Mr. Gravaine. Rod, you remember my speaking of Mr. Littmann?"

She noticed Roderick's stony expression, but his bow, though stiff, was adequate. She also perceived that Littmann's attention to him was negligible. His scrutiny was confined to her, but apart from a cursory and unintelligible acknowledgment of the introduction, he did not help her out by speaking, nor did Roderick.

"We've come to see some friends off. I suppose we had better look them up," she said smoothly after a pause, and held out her hand again. "*Bon voyage*, Mr. Littmann."

"Thank you." He seemed about to add something, but evidently decided to be silent, and with a quizzical smile, dropped her hand.

Roderick said nothing as they crossed the projecting brassbound threshold of the hatchway. The pungent, clean smell of linoleum and paint, the polish and dazzling cleanliness of the woodwork aroused in Elaine a keen reminiscent delight. She fell back a bit and took Roderick's arm.

"Rod, I wish we were going, too," she said with an eager sigh.

He glanced at her quickly.

"What put *that* idea into your head?" he demanded sharply. The hard irritation in his voice woke her to some meaning behind the simple words. It implied, "Is it the presence of Littmann?"

She dropped his arm, her heart pounding with a startled anger that bordered on disgust.

She had shopping to do when she left the dock, and Roderick had an appointment at his club. When they saw each other again, his manner toward her was as tenderly deferential as usual, and she wondered if she had, after all,



been the one to misunderstand. Perhaps it was her own inferiority that attributed to him a boorishness of which he was incapable.

Louise Hale, with her husband and little son, now three years old, moved down to Clairbridge about the middle of June. Louise did not wish to go farther from the city nor to attempt an independent sojourn anywhere just then, but she also feared the hot weather in New York. During that month before her second baby was born, in the quiet monotony of the days in the country, Elaine and she became close friends. Louise had all the fine qualities of her aristocratic mother and brother, and with them she combined a sense of humor that permitted her to see herself and her family in perspective. Elaine felt more honest with her than with the others.

"If I should swear," she thought once, "Mrs. Gravaine would go into mourning for her son, and Roderick would go into mourning for me, but Louise would merely say, 'Something has annoyed her,' and she'd investigate and set it right."

Louise was very fond of her. She was won to her first by Elaine's real affection for little Alfred and Alfred's devotion to the lively, pretty auntie who sang to him and played with him with such unabating enthusiasm. Elaine, who had never known any children intimately before, found him delightful. When Louise's baby was born, a little girl, Elaine was so enchanted by the tiny loveliness of the infant that she could hardly be kept from its side all day long.

When the baby was about a week old, she let Roderick know how envious his sister's happiness had made her. They were walking in the garden in the late July twilight, just before dinner. He drew her hand through his arm and squeezed it lovingly.

"My darling looks like a Madonna

with Louise's baby in her arms," he declared.

"It's not entirely because I think they're becoming ornaments that I envy Louise," she replied gently. "Oh, Rod, think how it would be for us—a little daughter like Louise's!"

"Are you serious, Elaine?"

"Profoundly serious, Roderick."

His hand clutched hers convulsively.

"Aren't we happy enough just as we are?" he asked in a shaken voice, after a pause. "I couldn't be happier. Elaine, my dearest, are you discontented? Have I failed to please you?"

"You've given me everything, Roderick dear. Suppose now—for a change—you let me give you something, too."

"You? You give me everything now! No, my darling, I couldn't bear the thought of what you would have to go through! My beautiful Elaine—No—no!"

He shuddered a little, and the act sent a hot flush over her face and neck. She tried to withdraw her hand, but he clung to it. She wanted to speak, but dared not give voice to the unforgivable words that surged up within her. The warm gray dusk, with the scent of garden flowers and the chirp of the first insect singers of the night, seemed to wall about her smotheringly. Inside her a little voice told her tauntingly that she had married a man who must forever remain a formal stranger to her. She hushed the voice by persuading herself that she was not qualified to appreciate the depths of Roderick's adoration. She tried to despise her own deficiency.

She envied the evident harmony and understanding between Louise and her husband.

"You and Harry are very happy," she ventured to Louise one day.

"We're a good old couple," smiled Louise. "A humdrum pair at the head of a family."

"Were you as happy before the family came?"

"Why, my dear"—Louise looked at her keenly—"it was a different sort then. But—I admit a family completes it."

"Rod doesn't want children."

"He isn't very fond of them."

"But one of his own?"

"He misses nothing while he has you, he loves you so, Elaine."

"I don't deserve it unless I make him some return." She startled herself by the significance of her words. "Something beside just affection," she explained, flushing, and, turning her chagrin into another channel, she concluded rebelliously, "Surely life is more than an exchange of emotions!"

"I wonder," mused Louise. "We all live to be happy."

Elaine bit her lip and looked away. That theory of life had not occurred to her, and yet, as Louise voiced it, she saw in it the motive for the conduct of these people of whom she had become one. She thought of herself scornfully as a laborer at heart, unused to enjoy leisure. She dared not admit that she was not happy lest she should sink still further in her own esteem.

"Your very beauty is a gift to Roderick," said Louise after a silence. "He desires to be envied. It would gratify him if you entertained a great deal next season."

"But here? I am not even the hostess in his mother's house."

"Why not come to town?"

"Then I could be near you—and the babies."

Louise pressed her hand.

In August, Roderick and Elaine went to the Canada woods on a canoe trip. It was so happy an experiment that they prolonged it for a month. They had one guide, and in camp all were kept busy. Roderick was a good woodsman, unexpectedly strong and

skillful in the open, and won Elaine's admiration back into a blaze. She strove to provoke praise from him for something beside her beauty, and once, when he had cut himself severely and, in the temporary absence of the guide, she came to his aid, he made her happy by admitting himself astonished and delighted by her nursing skill.

It was before their camp fire that she proposed the idea of a winter in town. It met with his warm approval, and the end of October saw them settled in New York on lower Madison Avenue in a large house such as she had once dreamed of, and not far from where Louise lived.

The preparation and decoration of her house filled Elaine's days with contented work. And at first her social life, many times gayer and fuller than last year, occupied her and swept her along. Louise's judgment of her brother was correct. Roderick did enjoy being envied. Elaine's social prestige reflected upon him. It had been a lucky choice. She had selected the only career in which success to her could crown him with equal glory.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

But a few months of society brought back to Elaine the same chafing at its pointless monotony that had irritated her the spring before. She was tempted into a mild flirtation or two, but found them boring and rather vulgar. Remembering Roderick's almost insulting jealousy of Littmann, she had been dismayed when he had first given evidence of perceiving a sudden friendship grow up between her and an elderly bachelor of their set who was well known for his gallantry, but he made no objection. She wondered if it were because attention from the experienced beau was a subtle flattery of his own good taste, while he disliked sharing predilections with a man of Littmann's caliber. Or

was it because gentlemen never overstep the mark set by honor and good taste?

But the amorous roué dispelled this myth by seizing an opportunity, when they were alone, to make plain his ambitions, so she was confronted by the ugly inconsistency of Roderick's behavior. She tried to exonerate him. He was young and proud and, doubtless unaware of his own real motives, he chose to believe in the integrity of men of his own class.

That spring she petitioned Roderick for a trip to Italy. She felt the need of miles of salt water and days of clear sea wind to wash and air the stuffiness of her mind. Roderick responded instantly to her appeal, and by the middle of June they were on their way across the Atlantic. The places of their honeymoon were revisited, beside others they had missed before, and a peace which she did not recognize as a truce came to Elaine. The changing scenes, the full days, the ready accession of Roderick to all her whims, lulled her into believing again that her own limitations had made her restive before. Roderick wished their life to be a continuous honeymoon, and to have been insensible to this desire, to have criticized it so ungratefully, seemed to her now to have been sheer perversity. He had a wealth of tenderness, gold, and time to make it possible, and his greatest pleasure was to shower these upon her without stint. If she were not to be swamped by his generosity, she must give him something in return, something besides passive acceptance, submissive hostility, or thanks. They had been to Bayreuth for the Wagner festival, and the musical atmosphere called out in him his superior appreciation and talent. She decided to fan the flame of his inspiration and dreamed of being able to bring to him the greatest gift of all—the gift of creation.

Up on a high green plain above the

deep blue of Como, she pleaded with him to spend the next winter in study.

"We could stay over here and go to Germany or France. I will study singing. I'd ask nothing better than to sing your songs, Roddy."

"I have a thousand songs for you, Elaine."

He promised nothing, but let her plan for him. In the end, he declared that they could study as well in New York, and he wished to be near his mother. They returned home in October, and he made some arrangements with an expensive teacher of counterpoint, but soon gave up his lessons, finding them cramping to his free spirit, as he said. Elaine, who had engaged a singing master, got so much joy from her work that she forgot she had taken it up primarily to be able to sing his songs, and though he gave up composing, she applied herself more and more.

They had rented the New York house and were entertaining as unremittingly as the year before, but Elaine was happier now. She delighted in her lessons and had the incomparable satisfaction of beholding her own progress, and, though she instinctively refrained from mentioning this to Roderick, she found great joy in performing for her friends. She reveled in the power she possessed to hold their attention, to sway their emotions, to awaken in them genuine admiration and applause. She knew she outclassed the few other women of her circle who sang, too, not so much in the quality of her voice, but in something that she had inherited from her former life.

Elaine's singing attracted so much notice among her friends that one enterprising dowager, who gained a reputation for humanitarianism by making most of her affairs benefits for the poor, begged of her that she would be on the program of a large musicale to be given in April. Elaine accepted and joyfully told Roderick.

"You wish to sing in public?"

"It's for charity, Rod."

"But the tickets are sold. Any one may buy. Crowds may come."

"I hope so."

"Vulgar people—out of curiosity! Just to stare at you! My dear, you could not tolerate it!"

"You forget, Rod, how I used to tolerate it without difficulty." No sooner had she said this than she realized its tactlessness.

"You were not my wife then. I hadn't the power to protect you."

He remained dully obstinate, but she determined not to give up petitioning. Then she, who had always been supremely healthy, was smitten the next day with illness. The news the doctor told her drove the musicale from her mind.

They moved to Clairbridge in April, and all those summer months that followed, Roderick's care and devotion seemed to grow. His mother and Louise were one with him in this.

On the ninth of October, her son was born. Roderick was called in from the lawn, where he had been battling desperately with the black wings of his imagination, which had obscured for him the glittering beauty of the starry autumn night. The exhaustion of that fight was on his pallid face when he entered her warmly lit bedroom. The stark anxiety in his eyes filled her with an unbidden horror of the binding power of his love.

"See your son, Roddy," she whispered.

He did not speak. His eyes looked drugged.

"Our son," she repeated faintly.

He dropped beside her bed, his head buried in the covers. She quieted him with the touch of her trembling fingers on his hair.

"Rod," she murmured. "Rod."

"Elaine—my darling! If you had—died!"

"Rod."

"If you had—and if I had had to live— Oh, my darling—I should not have lived! I should not have been different from you—except—Elaine—I should have known—the loneliness of my grave."

## CHAPTER XV.

Elaine's son was christened Miles after Roderick's father, and in a short time Elaine was up and about. Throughout the months preceding, she had looked forward to this as the time for the happening of a miracle. She had seen herself another Louise Hale, with Roderick altered into the quiet, amused, fatherly Harry Hale, joining her in centering all interest upon their little boy.

In less than two weeks, she realized the emptiness of her dream.

Under pretense that he feared for her health, Roderick forbade her to nurse her child and then, ostensibly for the child's good, put him directly under the care of a trained nurse, whose somewhat sour vigilance and strict routine thwarted the affectionate advances of the less disinterested. It is true the baby thrived physically under this régime, so that neither Elaine nor Mrs. Gravaire could voice protests with any effect.

So empty, indeed, was her maternity that when Roderick proposed opening the town house for a large affair at Thanksgiving, Elaine acquiesced without much urging, admitting that it was best to leave little Miles at Clairbridge rather than risk the change of the milk.

So, except for short visits, mere glimpses of her baby, and the thought she hugged secretly and passionately to her heart—"When he is older and stronger, I shall insist upon being the real mother of my son!"—Elaine spent the same sort of busy, futile winter that had fallen to her lot ever since her marriage. She met other society mothers,

some with more than one child, and they declared that they, too, for the children's sake, relegated them to the care of trained attendants in some healthy country place. One of these women was a Mrs. Reading, a sharp-featured, vivacious little woman with the reputation of being a dangerous, but most delightful, gossip.

"My children grow so in the intervals when I don't see them that it's like meeting a new set every time I go to visit them," she told Elaine. "I would go more often, only I fear I bore them with all my attention."

Louise Hale smiled when Elaine repeated this remark to her.

"She would accuse herself—or any one else—of anything on earth to appear amusing," she said.

"But, Louise, what can I do?"

"Do as you plan—wait till the baby is a bit better grown, and then insist on his being with you."

"Do you think I can influence Roderick?"

"Who but you, Elaine dear? He would go through fire for you."

"Then why—"

But Elaine broke off, for suddenly she had a glimpse of Roderick as vivid and fleeting as a lightning-lit figure. She saw him going through fire for her, ruthlessly, and through cruelly crooked and subtle ways to reach her and keep her entirely his own. Then she laughed down her own momentary belief that a man could be jealous of his infant son.

Roderick accepted an invitation for them to be one of a congenial party to tour the West in a private car during the month of June.

"You're so fond of traveling, my darling," he explained to her, and she said nothing to the contrary. She intended to take Louise's advice and bide her time.

But when she returned in July and beheld her baby changed into a little

child with eyes and gestures that bespoke preferences and aversions, she felt startlingly aloof from him. She had had nothing to do with this development, and, tiny as he was, he sensed her as a stranger, clinging to his grandmother when his mother wished to take him in her arms.

Her desperate effort, not only to win him, but to win back her mother love and hunger for him might have been successful only that Roderick, in August, was overwhelmed with a longing to repeat their Canadian canoe trip. She realized then fully what lay behind his scheming to keep her from Clairbridge.

"But Miles is still only a wee, unthinking baby," she consoled herself. "I shall win him yet when he is old enough."

The canoe trip did not renew the old sentiments in her. To her horror, Roderick's prowess struck her merely as the strutting of the male animal for the admiration of his mate. It was on this trip that for the first time she began to feel that her regard for him was dead. One night, creeping away alone under the tree-blocked stars, she faced the desperation of the gambler who has lost all.

"All my life must be spent paying for something that it is torture to receive," she thought blankly.

She quenched a spark of hope within her, the hope of his allowing her to return to the stage or of making real use of the new-found beauty of her voice. In one dark moment, she allowed herself to dream of leaving him. Then she remembered his agony the night Miles had been born, and the thrall of his dread lest he be robbed of her. But was it right that one human being should depend so upon another?

Her pity for him melted into a bitter scorn and resentment, which she tried her best to conquer. The effort deadened her, made her seem less capricious and more docile. She no

longer fretted about Miles. She began to find the thought of the child distasteful. She began to dislike Mrs. Gravaire, who had always charmed her, and finally she began to distrust Louise Hale, whose answer to her confidences had always been, "Rod loves you so."

"Love is not all!" she burst out at last, and the cry echoed and reverberated through her, bringing her a kind of comfort that, even in her captivity, she was not blind to this, even though she could have no hope that there was anything more in life for her. So the winter came and went, and in the spring they went to Europe again, but the charm of the trip was gone. She wondered if she had outgrown enthusiasm, was old and blasé at twenty-six.

They were to return home from Southampton, and spent their last two weeks in London. Here, in the lounge of the Savoy Hotel, where Elaine happened to be waiting for Roderick, she came face to face again with Samuel Littmann. The unexpected sight of him had something uncannily thrilling in it to her just then. A bit of the irrevocable past seemed on the point of returning. The pleased, welcoming look in her eyes drew him to her.

"How nice to see you!" she exclaimed.

"So homesick as that?" he smiled.

Her heart leaped at the application of his remark to something beside geography.

"How is my old world?" she asked.

He regarded her with that keen gaze she recalled now so vividly.

"That, too? Want to come back?" he demanded bluntly, with a rudeness that awoke her.

"With a husband that feels as mine does? And my little son?" She laughed it off.

"Son? Oh, I congratulate you." He bowed. "When are you going home?"

"Wednesday."

"I sail Saturday." He seemed ill at ease now; then suddenly held out his hand. "Well, good-by."

"Good-by, Mr. Littmann."

He held her hand longer than necessary, and in the meantime stared at her broodingly. She expected from that look that he would say something more, but at last he gave her fingers a final squeeze and left her. The next moment Roderick came up.

"I think I saw that—Littmann here in the lounge," he told her.

"Yes?" she asked indifferently, but made no other comment. It would have been a thankless effort to explain the scene just past.

It was only two months later that she met Littmann again, in New York, in the lobby of one of his own theaters, as she was about to enter. They bowed, then vaguely gravitated together, passed a few conventional, colorless remarks, and were about to separate when suddenly Elaine was moved to say:

"I'd like to see a rehearsal once more."

"There's a dress rehearsal of 'Amélie Awakes' on the twentieth. Want to come? It's at the Corinthian."

"That's too formal. I want a rehearsal where chairs are the only set and actors read their lines."

"Then come to the Corinthian any day until the twentieth."

"At any time?"

"The same old hours."

"I'll come." She laughed, shook hands, and left him. As she turned, she almost ran into Mrs. Reading, who bowed to her with a swift look over her shoulder toward Littmann.

Elaine might never have made good her promise. She completely forgot it, but it was recalled to her one day when some aberration of traffic held up her motor car before the doors of the Corinthian, as she was on her way across town to call for Roderick at his



club. She bade the chauffeur stop, told him to come back to the theater for her after he had taken Roderick home, and entered the stage door just as a little group of actors was leaving it. On the stage, lit by the meager working lights, stood Sam Littmann, going over the script with a thin young man, evidently the author.

When he saw Elaine, he left the young man and came eagerly forward.

"I seem to be too late for the rehearsal," she said, smiling.

She was introduced to the author, who after a moment left them. She begged Mr. Littmann to go, too, saying that her car would return soon and that she could wait for it in the lobby of the theater. But he declared that, if she had to stay there, he wanted to be with her, and drew up two chairs on the empty stage. They spoke first of trivialities. Littmann regretted that she had missed the rehearsal and hoped that she would come again. She remarked on the familiar orderliness of the vacant theater. They seemed to grow self-conscious, and their conversation became stilted and difficult.

"You have a child," he said at last, unexpectedly.

"Yes." She flushed.

"Are you fond of children?"

"I used to be." She shrugged. "I haven't much chance to find out, with my own. He lives with his grandmother in the country. The city is no place for babies."

"Elaine," he said abruptly, "the place for a baby is with its mother—and vice versa."

She smoothed her gloves with a faint smile, her eyes lowered. And all at once she saw his pudgy hand, with its highly polished finger nails and showy diamond ring, come into her field of vision, covering her hands.

"My dear girl, you—and I—were not idle," he said softly near her ear. "And," he added

after a pause, "it's bad business to be bored."

"Yes," she said indifferently.

"Do you want to come back?"

She looked up, startled.

"How *can* I?" she demanded.

"Then you don't."

His face was close to hers. She stared with fascination at the swarthy skin, the bluish jowl and chin, the pendant, bulbous nose, the too-prominent dark eyes. She mentally contrasted it with Roderick's delicate-featured, aristocratic countenance, and it was as if she were comparing her life with Roderick to the brutal ugliness of the life Littmann had to offer her, the life her mother had lived—and died of untimely.

"I am sorry to interrupt a—a—scene," said Roderick's voice courteously, "but Jackson said he had left you here, so I came to fetch you."

Elaine started up. Littmann rose, too, but remained close beside her.

"You came—on cue," he said composedly.

"Come, let us not prolong this," said Roderick coldly.

Elaine moved slowly toward him.

"Good night, Elaine," called Littmann placidly.

"Good night." She stopped a moment and turned to see the mixture of mockery and pity in his eyes.

Roderick said nothing till they got home. Then he asked Elaine to give him a few minutes in the library. She sat in the chair he indicated, and he shut the door and stood some distance from her, his arms on the back of another chair.

"I have tried," he began in a calm voice, "to think upon what grounds I may appeal to you. To one of finer sensibilities, the fact that I appeal at all—after— But I can't expect you to understand when I state that hate is not so bitter or so remorseless as out-

raged love. For, God help me, I still love you, Elaine! I would give my life to save you suffering and my honor to save you a word of scandal." His voice shook. "I have never had a thought but of your happiness."

"I know, I know," breathed Elaine.

For a moment she was overcome by the intensity and restraint of his emotion. She was confronted by the memory of his face the night Miles had been born. She understood and deeply commiserated him. Then the wave of sympathy receded, leaving her to face the familiar desert within her heart.

"But to be loved is not enough!" she cried out suddenly. "Love is not all!"

His slim hands tore convulsively at the chair back. His mouth hardened.

"Nor can you understand honor," he proceeded harshly. "I took that chance when I married you. Chance? I call it that, but I knew, even then. My love was mad, perhaps, but never blind. I believed in its power to uplift you, to imbue you with something of me—my standards and ideals. I overlooked the fact that you had not my background; I tried to forget that you *had* a background of your own. Yet, knowing what I know, I would go through it all again!"

"I have nothing but pity for you, Roderick."

"Pity!" He jumped as one stung. "Good God! What damnable hope was I clinging to? So you *pity* me—you and that vile Jew of yours! It was bad enough to know that before I married you—but since! Since you have known me! Oh, it might have been expedience then—poverty—need. But of choice! What malicious consciousness of your own baseness bids you try to drag me down to you by destroying my honor—the honor I intrusted so generously to you? What wrong have I done you but love you too well?"

"Perhaps that was wrong enough,"

declared Elaine grimly. "What do you accuse me of?"

He stared at her despairingly.

"You look—— But no!" He laughed sharply. "As if a man were not fool enough to marry beneath him, he must yet choose an actress! Oh, yes—you act well! And this is a part you probably learned in early childhood from your mother. In London you acted, pretending you had not seen him, there where you elected to renew this shameful intimacy!"

"Roderick—take care!"

"And you were overheard in a theater lobby making an assignation. 'The same old hours,' he called out loud, for the world to hear!"

"This is madness, Roderick!"

"And was this afternoon madness, too? To have seen you fondling his hand, his fat, sensual face close to yours—— No! I can't stand it! You, so chillingly beautiful to me! Why was I not common and low, clay of your clay?"

Elaine rose stiffly.

"Have you finished?" she asked.

"To forgive"—he eyed her miserably—"to forgive—what's past—would be so easy! But you—how could you see nobility in that? You would despise me for it!"

"Yes," said Elaine quietly, "I should despise you. Let me go."

She tried to pass him, but with a quick, unexpected spring, he seized her and drew her to him, crushing her as she struggled in his arms, kissing her violently; and then, still holding her close, he gave full vent to his pent-up wrath and passion. She scarcely heard half of what he said; a fierce stream it was, of denunciation and fervent yearning, endearments that were bitter insults and curses that ended in savage compliments.

Elaine literally beat herself free and could have sobbed with joy to find the door unlocked. So she escaped

disheveled to her room, where her maid was quietly laying out her clothes for a dinner that evening.

"*Madame n'a jamais porté cet éventail et ça ira bien avec cette toilette, n'est-ce pas?*" The maid held up a feather fan, rich, but ornate, the fan Carrie Ingersoll had given Elaine for a wedding present.

"Leave it on the bed and bring me my jewel box. Then go till I call you, Jacqueline," answered Elaine.

When she was alone, she locked the door, searched in the jewel box, and found a square of thin white papers—seven one-hundred-franc notes. Then she rearranged her long gold hair, removed all her jewelry, including her wedding ring, and left them in a pile on an ivory tray on her dressing table.

From the cupboard she chose a plain hat which she draped with a thick veil. Then she took a small, handsome leather dressing case from the shelf and into this packed a few clothes, the feather fan, and the hundred-franc notes. At last, bag in hand, she stole from her room. No one was in the hall to see her leave the house.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Elaine spent the first night of her freedom at a quiet, but fashionable hotel. She had to go somewhere where she did not need to pay in advance, as she could not exchange her French money that night. The next day, when she transacted this business, she was somewhat dismayed to discover that she netted less than she had expected. Urged on by this fact, she rented a cheap room in a boarding house in the theatrical district she had once so deplored.

She told herself that she would not hide from Roderick. If he wished to seek her out, she would see him and be firm. But as the days went on, she dreaded the possibility of an interview,

and found herself casting furtive glances about the street and finding excuses for dodging any one who suggested him in size or gait.

And she became suddenly aware of an unsuspected inhibition. She could not make up her mind to go to Littmann and ask him for a part.

At first she made herself believe that her ambition was now to do nothing but musical comedy—to put to use her vocal training, the one thing Roderick had given her, as a sort of poetic justice. She even confined her visits, those first few days, to agents and managers who specialized in comic operas. But she soon had to enlarge the field of her efforts and, in doing so, faced the truth.

"Is it just the poison of his evil mind?" she asked herself doubtfully. "Yet men can read each other," and she remembered and put new meaning into the slow, speculative look that always came into Littmann's eye when he saw her, and felt again the touch of his hand on hers.

"I can't—I can't!" she choked. "Any more than I could go back to *him*!"

It was a dull theatrical year, and it was almost impossible for an unknown actress to get a hearing. The weeks flew by. Even with much scrimping and a little starving, Elaine saw her funds melt away. She had had to establish herself with her landlady by buying a second-hand trunk and a more suitable and extensive wardrobe. To this end, she had sold the fan and even the dressing case and some of the clothes she had packed in it. At first she recoiled from the thought of using money procured from the sale of anything Roderick had given her, but necessity made it impossible for her to indulge in sentimentality of this sort.

One day, about four months after she had left Roderick, she met an actress who had been a friend of her mother's. This woman, a Mrs. Mar-

tello, knew a composer who had just written the music of a comic opera recently accepted by Thresham, a manager of some importance and renown. Mrs. Martello arranged to have her meet the composer, an excitable little Viennese. He grew so enthusiastic over Elaine's voice that she felt that her troubles were over at last, and this impression was heightened for her two days later, when he personally took her to see Thresham.

Thresham was a big, smooth man with a grating, monotonous voice and a cool way of saying cutting and sarcastic things. To her delight, he engaged her to play a contralto part. Rehearsals began the next day, and Elaine met the author of the libretto. He was a fair-haired, red-skinned man with sharp green eyes that snapped angrily at every alteration in the text of his play. His self-control was worn so thin by the producer's ruthless cuts and interpolations that he took out his temper on any luckless actor who carelessly substituted words of his own in the uncensored parts. Thresham's sneering hauteur, the composer's temperamental meddlesomeness, and the librettist's repressed and boiling indignation, combined to make rehearsals a miserable succession of small explosions, until, after two weeks of hard labor, there was a final row, an enlivening scene before the assembled cast, in which the librettist, in a passion, tore up the script, and words were exchanged that made the continuation of work that day impossible.

The next morning, on reporting at the theater at the usual hour, Elaine was informed that the whole production was called off. The two weeks of rehearsal had brought her nothing but a disappointment that was the nearest thing to despair she had ever known.

She went home, crushed in spirit, and, throwing herself upon her bed, for the first time broke down completely.

She did not hear the knock on her door, though it had been repeated several times. She became aware at last that the door had been opened, and standing on the threshold she beheld Louise Hale.

She sprang up from the bed and stood facing her sister-in-law, conscious of the shabby ugliness of the narrow room, realizing keenly that her hair was rumpled and her eyes red, fully alive to all her disadvantages, yet thrilled with the sudden strength of warm blood racing through her arteries, the blood of conflict and new determination.

"Elaine!" exclaimed Louise. Her voice was tender and husky. Elaine braced herself against its effect with an effort.

"What do you want?" demanded Elaine defensively. She saw a deep crimson wave rise in Louise's cheek.

"The woman downstairs told me to come up. I knocked several times. I tried the handle, never dreaming— But the door was unlocked. It was—that—an unintentional intrusion. But now I am here, may I not stay for a moment or two?"

Louise had a manner, something human, something that suggested understanding, something that had always won Elaine and that won her now.

"Sit down," Elaine said, motioning to a misshapen rocking-chair, and seated herself on the trunk which, covered with a dusty cretonne cover, served as a sort of window seat.

Louise took the offered chair and for a moment eyed Elaine in silence.

"Why did you come?" asked Elaine, meeting her gaze calmly.

"Why do you ask?" replied Louise simply.

"How did you find out where I live?"

"He—had you—followed."

Elaine contemplated her suppressed confusion with scorn.

"Did he get much amusement from the sport?" she inquired bitterly.

"Yes, it is ugly," admitted Louise in a low, firm voice, "but not really contemptible, when you know all. Won't you let me tell you more—try to make you understand?"

"It will be useless," answered Elaine. "There's nothing left to understand."

"It was more than a week after you went before we really knew that you had gone for good," began Louise, speaking in the even, impersonal tone of one giving evidence in court. "He said nothing, not even then—made no explanations. He went on to Clair-bridge that next week-end and stayed on. He looked as if he had been through a terrible illness. He did not mention you—in fact, he spoke even less than usual. He ate nothing, and all night long mother and the servants would hear him about the house or grounds. We began to fear for his health and his sanity, but he would see no doctor.

"Of course he couldn't stand this long. He became dangerously ill, and several time we were sure—— But the Gravaines are hardy and stubborn. One day I made him speak of you. I promised I would go to you and beg you to return just as soon as he was well enough. That, I believe, hurried his convalescence. When he was a little better, he did what seemed so despicable to you—hired men to find you, so that I might go to you from him. Does it look so unpardonable now?"

"Does he really think I'll come back?" inquired Elaine inscrutably.

Louise, biting her lips, paid some attention to the fit of her gloves at the wrist before she answered.

"He—inquired for you first at—Littmann's offices," she said.

Elaine nodded, her face ashen white.

"He—told me to tell you—that—even had he found you there—he wanted—you—back." Louise hesitated a moment, then, leaning forward, placed her hand on Elaine's knee. "Elaine," she

said in a gentle voice, "Roderick is very proud. Can't you see the cost to him that saying this alone would be? Think, then, what his love is."

"For six years," answered Elaine, "I had nothing to do but to think of it. It's because I know the monstrous thing his love is that I can never return to it."

"Elaine, what are you saying?"

"To you, Louise, love has been a companionship, a shared delight in your children, a partnership in pleasure and trouble. I think that must be real love, for it is lasting and healthy and happy. You *are* happy with Harry, aren't you?"

"Yes, but Harry! There is no comparison to——"

"No, no. I know. Let me speak now. When I married Roderick, I brought to him respect, loyalty, and admiration, and then a deep affection that was a sort of motherliness. Can love be made of worthier stuff? But gradually I discovered that he wanted none of these from me, that he wanted nothing from me—not love itself, had I had it to offer. He only wanted *me*. He would not be satisfied with what I could give; he wanted something more, something impossible, something the taking of which would destroy me. For if he possessed my soul, I could no longer possess it. I would no longer be me. And when he saw the limits of his ownership of me, he tried to comfort himself by assuring himself that any part of me out of his reach was vile. He deliberately tried to deface and soil those parts, to defile what he could not tyrannize over."

"Elaine, you're talking nonsense!"

"Do you think so? Haven't I heard him speak? Hasn't he told me openly that all my past before he knew me was low and vicious—that he married me knowing it, so that his love might redeem me? He meant so that his love might devour me to gratify him. Is that love, you who must know?"

"How can you speak like this when I've told you he can't live without you?"

"We can't live without food, either! Good God, what stupendous impertinence leads him to make me his prey? Yet listen, Louise. If I had been feeding myself, my individuality, to one who made of it something fine and useful, I might still have stayed with him. Better women than I have done as much. But what I gave him was wasted. He didn't use me to develop his great talent, those gifts he has let rot because he has no spiritual energy. He is like some horrible voluptuary, living merely to feed and feed!" Her voice broke hysterically. "Louise, you say he can't live without me. Is death so terrible? If it were merely to give up my life for him that you asked me to go back, I would go—willingly. But there are far worse things than death, and there is a thing worse than slow starvation, than utter destitution and hopelessness—yes, more degrading than the prostitution of one's body. I can't go back to that thing!"

They were both silent a moment, and the room was filled with the sound of Elaine's heavy breathing. Louise seemed to wait until this had quieted.

"Haven't you forgotten one thing to which you would be returning, too?" she asked at last gently. "Your child."

Elaine clasped her long white fingers upon her knees and looked up levelly under her brows.

"My child?" she repeated, and there was a little mocking undertone in her voice. "One autumn day and evening, I was very ill. I, who had never known pain or sickness before, suffered and suffered, hours on end, sustained only by the thought that a great miracle was happening—that I was becoming a mother. Louise, he came into the room when it was over, more inexorable and merciless than the angel of death, to rob me of my baby and of my mother-

hood. Haven't I told you time and again of his trickery? For my good, for the child's good— Ah, those revolting lies that I knew were lies! He choked off every thought I might have directed away from him to the son I had borne him. He deliberately atrophied the noblest impulse a woman possesses. Is it *my* crime that he succeeded? I have rarely held my baby in my arms. I have never had him alone with me. He turned from me in shyness and terror as if I were an unpleasant stranger, but what is worst of all, I, who at first grieved so deeply, grew gradually to resent the innocent little thing's coldness, to grow cold and indignant myself, to feel nothing but repugnance for his name.

"My only vivid memory of my baby is of the birth pangs he caused me. I could have loved him once, when he was mine. But he is a changeling now, the work of hired nurses, strangers whose duty it was to guard him from my advances. And now Roderick sets this trap to bring me back?" She laughed harshly. "Tell him from me that in the past he took too much trouble to make the bait unpalatable for it to be tempting now. I have no mother's heart. It was he who made it sterile."

Louise sat motionless, her eyes downcast for some minutes, then hesitatingly she rose. When she looked up, Elaine beheld her eyelids wet with tears. Alas for her, they were Roderick's eyes, and Elaine shivered slightly.

"I can say no more," said Louise at last. "Is it, then, true that a man must kill the thing he loves? My poor brother! But I see—he has killed you, and it is not your fault. Only one thing more. I don't know how you will take this. It's worse than useless to plead that it is his—love still that dictates it. We know you haven't gone on the stage again. It is his wish to provide for you in the hope that you never will."



Elaine's pupils dilated, and her eyes shot blue fire.

"You may tell him," she declared, "that I am not on the stage only because I have not yet found a manager to give me a part. You may tell him that he has aroused in me at last one grateful thought, and from the depths of my heart I thank him for putting new courage into me, for inspiring me never to give up! But tell him—so that he may see I am not blind, and that he may know that even my hate is calm and impersonal—that I will not use his precious name, but neither will I disguise or give up my own."

"I am sure he did not mean——"

"You are generous, Louise."

"But you will allow him to——"

"You know very well I will not. It is over. You say he has killed me. Yes. Convince him of that. For my part, I have not only died, I have been reborn—and I have no memory of the past."

"If you are hard, at least you are brave. Yes, I know you have suffered. I can't blame you. Circumstances——"

"No, you may blame me! We make circumstances. They don't make us. Roderick had his turn, and now I have mine. Wait. I did not think I had a message for him, but I have—a message of comfort and of warning. Tell him he still has Miles."

"Nothing more?"

"Those are the last words of his dead wife."

"They are cruel."

"Not so cruel as his last words to me."

"Good-by, Elaine." Louise held out her hand, and Elaine clasped it warmly.

"We give up much when we give up memories. But we must live forward. Good-by, Louise."

When Louise had gone, she thought:

"Now, at last, I can go to Littmann."

But days passed and weeks passed, and she could not bring herself to go.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Some time later, an elaborately dressed woman entered the summer-wide doors of a fashionable store and was suddenly accosted by some one who rose from a seat at a counter near by and, rushing up to her, seized her hands.

"Carrie Ingersoll! I'm so glad to see you! Do look as if you expected to meet me. The girl at the counter, there, asked me twice if I were waiting for some one. You know me, don't you? Elaine Harcourt."

"Of course," Carrie stammered, and swiftly noted her neat, and inexpensive attire, her pale, thin face and large, hollow eyes. "Of course, but why should you care? Weren't you waiting for some one?"

"No. How have you been? You look well."

"I am. I'm married."

"Not to——"

"Mr. Ruggers, yes." Carrie smirked. "From Pittsburgh. We're in New York for a few days. His wife died. She was an awful woman. Two years ago. And he married me. We're very happy. And how is your husband?" she added uncertainly.

"I left him six months ago."

"You don't say so? You mean—are you back on the stage?"

"At the agents! I can't land a part, Carrie."

"But—is it—must you—won't——"

"It's everything you think. We didn't agree. I got a hankering for the footlights, and I'm still hunting up and down Broadway for the chance to get back to them."

"Won't Littmann give you anything? I thought he liked your work."

"Littmann?" Elaine colored. "I can't go to him."

"Why? You mean——" Carrie grew red in her turn. "I ain't the one to give advice. You know it wouldn't

have kept *me* back. And you're hard up?"

"A little. I sold that fan you gave me."

"Think of you remembering that fan!" Carrie looked uncomfortable. "Listen, Elaine, I'm awfully hungry. Is it too early to ask you to lunch? Then maybe we could talk better together. It's almost half past eleven."

Elaine turned her head away.

"It is early," she protested weakly, and Carrie, recognizing in the tone something she, too, had suffered, put her arm through Elaine's and led her out of the store.

Over the appetizing little table in a corner of the large, empty dining room at Martin's, Elaine gradually gave way and voiced in some degree, with hesitation and constraint, a part of the loneliness, despair, and physical distress of the months just past.

Carrie tactfully refrained from asking anything more about Elaine's domestic troubles. Once only she inquired gravely:

"Can't you go back to—to your husband?"

"No," answered Elaine with finality. "I would rather go to Littmann for help."

"Well," declared Carrie, smoothing her napkin, "that's what you've got to do."

Elaine shuddered slightly, but said nothing. For the last month, she had been facing this necessity, growing more used to it daily, and she realized now that she had only been waiting for some one like Carrie, who had been through the same adversity and compromise, to convince her that it had become inevitable.

"Will he give you a divorce?" asked Carrie, following out a train of thought of her own.

Elaine started.

"I don't know," she answered apa-

thetically. "Anyway—I never want to marry again."

"You've had hard luck. Ruggers ain't much to look at, but I'm glad I'm his wife. He never had a decent home with that other woman, and he's grateful to me. And he always was kind. Not romantic of course, but—I'm not romantic, either. They say Sam Littman is awfully kind."

"Yes," admitted Elaine huskily.

"Go up to his office this afternoon while you're in the mood," suggested Carrie energetically. "Haven't you got something—showier to wear?"

"No, I've pawned mostly everything. Besides, my landlady has my trunk, security for rent I owe her."

"Let me lend you some money. I got slews."

"Carrie—you are so good! I dared not go home last evening. I was—without a roof all night."

But on their way to her rooming house, they would have to pass Littmann's office. Carrie argued that it would be wasting time not to drop in.

"You'd look all right with a bit of color in your face. I have rouge with me. Come to the dressing room and let me fix you up," she proposed.

Elaine let herself be persuaded. She told herself that she was grateful anyway for the comfort of friendly aid in taking an ugly leap. Carrie went with her to the office, but for the time being Elaine was spared, for Littmann was not in. She left her name and went with Carrie to her lodging, where Carrie paid the landlady enough back rent to redeem the trunk and procure two weeks' more credit. Then, after reviewing Elaine's wardrobe, Carrie invited her to her hotel to lend her a suitable hat and to introduce Mr. Ruggers, who was to meet his wife there at three o'clock.

Ruggers turned out to be as unobtrusive as he was unattractive, and the hat proved the opposite in both respects.

"But one must look just a little fast to get any attention from men," was Carrie's argument.

Mr. Ruggers invited her to dine with them, and out of respect for her fatigue, dined early. He and Carrie then took her home before they set out for the theater that was their evening's goal.

The next morning, Elaine rouged her thin cheeks lavishly and added shadows to her sunken eyes. She topped her efforts with her borrowed hat, and the effect was unmistakable. It took her some moments to decide to leave it.

She was told at Littmann's office that he had left word for her to meet him at the Corinthian, where he was rehearsing. When she got there, she found him on the bare stage, directing several actors, while other men and women sat around in shadowy corners, talking in low voices, or paced up and down studying their parts in the uncertain light. Littmann, being told she was there, came over to her, his puzzled eyes fascinated by her hat.

"You wanted to see me?" he asked.

"I want to act," she answered simply. "Can you give me a part?"

"Yes," He displayed no astonishment. "Go up to the office to the right, off the balcony. On the desk you'll find the script of a play called 'The Helmsman.' Look it over with the idea of doing *Flora Hall*. It's the second woman's part. I'll be up in an hour, when I get through here."

"Thank you." Elaine's voice trembled.

"Humph!" he responded, and turned away from her, with another interested glance at her hat.

Elaine found the office, a small, empty room, none too neat and smelling of cigar smoke. After a struggle with the window to let in some air, she took up the script and, sitting in a hard chair near the desk, started to read it.

But she could not fix her attention on the play. She felt dazed, vaguely

excited, and both depressed and happy. The glimpse of the stage and its quiet, businesslike rehearsal, the feel of the heavy, red-scored, thin-leaved manuscript in her hand, the very closeness of the room that hot July, morning, with its air of secret preparation, all these things recalled to her vividly the old sensations of this life that had been her mother's, in which she, too, had had some joy and some success.

She had come home to her world, her toil, her people.

Then her mood darkened. She was not back yet. Something sinister had yet to be faced, something fine to be sacrificed. Life was bitter and complex, full of revolting capitulations.

"Tired?" asked a gruff voice.

She started up. Littmann stood before her with his hands in his pockets and his eyes trained above the level of her eyes. Again her hat!

"Just a little warm," she responded nervously.

His glance was lowered to her face.

"Have you been sick?" he demanded.

His manner was almost brutal, his tone rude and brusque, but the question came to her like the harsh, but welcome sound of one who wakens us from a nightmare.

"Oh, not at all sick," she replied hastily.

"You're very thin." He looked her up and down.

"I can fatten up." It was a tribute to his gaze that the only thought he aroused in her was wonder if he considered her too thin for the part he offered.

"What did it? Worry?" An offensively personal question.

"Partly."

"Had a rotten time getting him to give in?"

"Him? Whom?"

"Your lord and master."

"I left my husband six months ago."

"Oh." He sat on the edge of the

desk beside her and continued to stare down at her. "What about the baby?"

"Baby? Miles!" She blushed deeply under her rouge. All at once, it seemed to her reprehensible that she had not once mentioned Miles to Carrie. "I—I never was a real mother to him. You can't love a baby you see by the permission of nurses for five minutes once a fortnight."

He grunted, and was silent.

"Nothing—nothing would ever drag me back to that life!" she burst out suddenly, unnerved by the long pause.

"What have you been doing in that six months you speak of?" demanded Littmann irrelevantly.

"Looking for work."

"What kind?"

"Why—the stage."

"Why didn't you come to me before?"

"I—I——" She pulled confusedly at her gloves. "You see, I had taken singing lessons, and I wanted—I had ambitions—comic opera. I did have a job—with Thresham—but there was some trouble, and they called off the production."

"What made you come to me at last?"

"A friend—Carrie Ingersoll—Mrs. Ruggers."

"Don't know her."

"Nor does *she* know *you*!" she declared with feeling.

He reached over and with gross familiarity took her face in his hand, drawing it round so that she was forced to look straight at him.

"Why are you afraid of me?" he demanded curtly.

"I'm not," but she felt her nostrils quiver, and her eyes closed.

He released her, got down from the desk, and, sauntering over heavily to an untidy bookcase in the corner, took from it a humidior and helped himself to a cigar, his back toward her. Nor did he turn till he had lighted the cigar

and a thick cloud of tobacco smoke veiled them from each other. Through a rift in it, she was astonished to see that not only was he smiling, his eyes broadly twinkling, but that he was having some difficulty to suppress a laugh.

"I know what you're afraid of," he declared at last. "Well, we'd better clear up a misunderstanding." He looked down at his cigar, and shook a little with inward mirth. "Gad!" he exclaimed coarsely. "How do they expect we get any work done?"

"Please, Mr. Littmann!" she pleaded, shocked.

"No, no, dear. We must talk it out, even if it is kind of raw. It's their sort, with their innuendoes, that make it necessary. Look here, my girl, life isn't all mush. Apart from that—the Lord knows I'm not handsome, but I've known—there have been—women. Well. Anyhow, I know better than to try to buy love and—anything else—I can get cheaper—elsewhere. Understand?"

To her horror, she felt the tears well over.

He made an elaborate affair of a hunt for an ash tray, forgetting that he had just flicked off the ashes on the floor.

"And now to business. Do you want to do *Flora Hall*?"

"Oh, yes."

"A hundred and fifty enough?"

"Thank you, Mr. Littmann."

"The part will get you in stride for a lead later in the season. Only you've got to work."

"I want to."

"We open in two weeks in Baltimore. Four weeks on the road and then open here at the Corinthian. About the sixth of September. I suppose you're hard up. Want a week's advance?" He pulled out his check book as if taking it as a matter of course. "To Elaine Harcourt, I suppose?" he inquired, halting his pen.

"Yes, please. I will give him back his name." She smiled wanly.

He wrote, and the act seemed to sever the last link that held her enslaved. Her relief reacted as sudden pity for the Gravaines.

"Oh, what a horrible scandal there will be!" she gasped.

"Don't count on it," replied Littmann cheerfully. "That sort of publicity is damn' tricky. Here you are. By the way, I'm taking Dick Sims—that's the author—out to lunch. Want to come along with us?"

"No, thanks. I'd better read the play."

"Well, get some lunch, and be back

here about two, anyway. Might as well rehearse right off. Brooks will give you your part." He stood up. "I'm glad you're back, girl. You'll make good at this game."

"If only out of gratitude!" she exclaimed.

"Gratitude nothing! This is business. There's money in you." He paused at the door and looked back at her. "Oh, Elaine," he called, "that's a hell of a hat!" And he vanished.

She laughed a bit hysterically, then impetuously removed the hat, laid it with care on the desk beside her, and settled back to read the play.



## DEPARTURE

**I**T'S little I care what path I take,  
And where it leads it's little I care,  
But out of this house, lest my heart break,  
I must go, and off somewhere!

It's little I know what's in my heart,  
What's in my mind it's little I know,  
But there's that in me must up and start,  
And it's little I care where my feet go!

I wish I could walk for a day and a night  
And find me at dawn in a desolate place,  
With never the rut of a road in sight,  
Or the roof of a house, or the eyes of a face.

I wish I could walk till my blood should spout,  
And drop me, never to stir again,  
On a shore that is wide, for the tide is out,  
And the weedy rocks are bare to the rain.

But dump or dock, where the path I take  
Brings up, it's little enough I care,  
And it's little I'd mind the fuss they'll make,  
Huddled dead in a ditch somewhere.

*"Is something the matter, dear," she said,  
"That you sit at your work so silently?"  
"No, mother, no—'twas a knot in my thread.  
There goes the kettle—I'll make the tea."*

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.



# The Rim

By  
Bonnie Ginger

Author of  
"The Mahogany Streak,"  
"Benefits Accruing,"  
etc.

**M**ANILA was a place too used to coincidences to be agitated by that which struck Martha Dare as so remarkable. She had just come from the States, where she was engaged to a man called Will Sheldon, only to learn of another Will Sheldon here, whom her fellow nurses at the general hospital told her she would meet soon, as he was very popular.

Indeed, she shortly met him at a dance, and he showed his knowledge of the situation by saying, "Your fiancé may claim a waltz, may he not?" To which she replied, "Yes, if you don't mind my pretending it's the *real* Will Sheldon I'm dancing with." And he said, "But I can't picture one any more real than he who is now taking you to the floor."

She laughed, and later two-stepped with him, but without feeling that she exactly liked him. He had a look of mockery about him, and she thought him too languid, and suspected his lanky, six-foot slouch of being rather a pose. They continued to meet, and she continued to dislike him. She could not divine his character, and his mocking gaze irritated her. She began to avoid him, not minding if he saw that she did.

"If my name had been John Jones," Sheldon said to her one day, "I'd have had my share of success with you. But

as it is, I merely remind you of that other Sheldon, and you compare us, and I suffer."

"The other men here suffer by that same comparison."

"Very likely. Still, they make some progress. I wonder how I'd fare if I should divulge to you that I'm a writer. Will Sheldon is only my nom de plume, and my real name is Oswald Bittersweet."

"But do writers use their noms de plume socially?"

"Ah, yes, that was stupid. Well, I'm not a writer, but—I'm a forger—and my true name is Frederick Quincy Updegraff. Now you know my terrible secret—and will you dance with me?"

"What? With a forger?" and she shook her head.

"Very well, Martha Dare. But if, after to-night, you see me flinging myself to the dogs, you'll know where the blame lies."

She saw his eyes full of mockery, and in a sudden wave of dislike she thought, "He's one of those men who think all women are fools at heart." And she determined to snub him definitely. But it turned out that she got no chance, for he ceased to pay attentions to her, and soon afterward he went into the provinces.

Martha was signed up to the government for a year, and as that time ap-



proached its close, she found herself already regretting the gay, hectic tropics, though at the same time she longed for New York—her native town—and for the life she was to live there with her mate-to-be.

This latter was a Westerner, with interests in Alaska. He was in Alaska now, but he was to meet Martha in San Francisco, where they were to be married. The announcements were being printed in San Francisco.

About a month before Martha was to leave, Sheldon came back from the provinces. He looked thinner than ever, and in fact had had a native illness, for which his medical friends urged a trip to the States. At first he refused. Then suddenly he changed his mind, and thus became a fellow passenger of the prospective bride's.

Martha, hearing of this before sailing, determined to have nothing to do with him, and he did not thwart her in her purpose. The very fact that on so long a voyage they seldom encountered pointed to his own deliberate avoidance of her.

She was glad of this, until she discovered how dull the other passengers were. Even the cavalry officer was a puppy, and the lawyer turned out a cad. One day she went up to Sheldon where he leaned over the rail. He had not yet regained his strength, she noted. But he was as aloof as ever, and her antagonism flared up again.

"He's still piqued because I snubbed him in Manila," she thought, and then she was furious with herself for thinking of him at all. But she couldn't help seeing how he might have made the trip less tedious. He sat at her table, and though he did not always talk, when he did, she saw how he mentally overtopped the others.

At last, the trip drawing toward its end, she began to think more exclusively of her lover. She had met him in Seattle, and the affair had been brief

and violent, before she had sailed for the Philippines and he for Alaska.

She knew that she had flirted a lot in Manila, but at least she had been faithful to her engagement, which was proof of love, for there had been previous engagements which she had not kept. True, as San Francisco came nearer, she would sometimes be a little afraid of what lay before her, and then she would reread her lover's letters, and would see she had chosen rightly. His were the most gorgeous love letters even she had ever received.

The ship entered Golden Gate on a clear morning. Martha saw Sheldon at the prow, and in the excitement of the coming landing, she went up to him, smiling and very friendly.

"You're going to wish me happiness?" she asked charmingly.

He looked at her a moment, oddly, and then said:

"Miss Dare, you can't think I wish you anything else?"

"Thank you. You see, you remind me of Manila, and now it's as if my friends there had spoken through you."

He bowed.

"But you'll not be thinking of Manila when a certain man shows himself at the wharf."

"But later on I shall." She blushed suddenly, and then said, pointing to the city before them, "Think of being able to shop in American stores again!"

"Ah—of course you'll have shopping. And have you friends in Frisco?"

"No, I shall be at the Rutgers." And because she now somehow regretted having forced him to wish her happiness, which he had done so impersonally, she yielded to a malicious impulse and added, "Perhaps you'll call and compare yourself with the *real* Will Sheldon?"

"But," was his careless answer, "there must be scores of Will Sheldons scattered about the earth. Surely it

isn't such an uncommon name? But as to the call—since you ask me—who knows?" And, lifting his cap, he sauntered away. That was the last she saw of him.

Then came her disappointment, and it was a sharp one. Her lover was not at the wharf. But reaching the hotel, she found his wire. He had been delayed in Seattle, unavoidably, but would arrive in Frisco in two days.

"But it doesn't matter so dreadfully," she presently reflected. "I can be shopping."

She returned to the hotel toward evening. Without a prescience of the terrible thing that was about to happen to her, she was getting her key at the desk when a young woman of rather striking appearance came toward her.

"You are Miss Martha Dare?"

"Yes," said Martha, and wondered why the young woman looked so strangely at her.

"My name is Wanda Crowell. You have never heard of me?"

"I—I don't remember. But nurses have such bad memories——"

"I am a nurse myself. Do you mind if we speak in private?"

Still without the slightest presentiment, she took the unknown visitor upstairs.

And then, as far as Martha's experience was concerned, the cataclysm of the great earthquake repeated itself within the four small walls of that hotel bedroom.

Out of the chaos, as she saw it when she could think at all, two facts were clear.

The first was that Wanda Crowell had the rights on her side.

It was of no consequence that she was a fierce, vindictive woman. She had the only argument. She had been deceived. And she had, besides, the proofs. They were so complete that it was without the slightest hesitancy

that Martha said at last, speaking through white lips, "Then you are the one he will marry."

The second fact was her own fury, her scorn of this man who had lived his paltry lie, who had told neither of his women of the existence of the other and had gone back to Alaska and there cowardly kept on with his first love, without even the brains, it seemed, to see what would come of his poltroonery, what would have to come of it with a woman like this Wanda Crowell, when she once found out.

"Was it you," she asked of the girl, "who had him detained in Seattle, so that you could come here and see me?"

"Of course. That wasn't hard to do—to arrange a fake mining deal—when I know half the men in the Klondike." The girl shrugged. Then she looked at Martha queerly. "I was going to threaten you. I'm ashamed of that, now that I've seen you."

"And do you imagine," Martha answered, "that I would marry him now if he were the last man alive? A *weakling*!"

"But you didn't think he was a weakling—when you got those?" And the girl glanced at the bed, where the trousseau purchases were thrown. Then another swift change followed. "Yes, you despise me for loving him, but some women are like that. It's only the weaklings they do love." And with that she left.

All night long, it seemed to Martha that acid was eating her brain. She thought of the farce of her existence, of the wedding things in a heap on the floor, of her mock visions of the bridal years in New York, of the lies she must tell. As for New York, it was the last place she could go to, except back to Manila. She would go abroad, perhaps, and she must keep on nursing. How much money had she left? Not two hundred dollars.

Should she stay and meet him, and show him what he had become in her estimation, or should she leave, never setting eyes on him? Even in the morning she had not decided.

At last, toward noon, feeling that she needed air and exercise in order to think, she dressed and started to leave the hotel.

In the lobby she confronted, as if he were waiting for her, the last man she would have wished to see at that moment—Sheldon of Manila.

"No, I'm not ill—but I have an appointment."

"Then may I walk with you a little way?"

"Mr. Sheldon," and she said his name with difficulty, "do you mind my saying that I really want to be alone?"

"But ought you to be alone? You do look pale——"

"That I can not help," she said sharply.

"Miss Dare, if anything has happened, and if I can be of the slightest assistance——"

"You can, by using your common delicacy," she replied bluntly. But his expression began to disturb her, especially when he said:

"There's a little park down the street. Will you go there with me for a few moments? It may be to your advantage."

"What do you mean? What *can* you mean?"

"I desire nothing but the chance to explain, believe me."

She made a gesture, almost desperate. Then she said:

"Very well, let us go."

He conducted her to the park, and to a secluded bench, but she refused to sit.

"Miss Dare, you appealed to my common delicacy. But what I need is something uncommon—and as I haven't that, there's only one other way and that's brutal frankness."

After a full stare at him, she answered:

"I suppose you to be fully qualified as to the brutal. The frankness is a side I confess I didn't think you had. But at least it ought to result in brevity, and that I do demand."

"Then I obey you. Last evening I came to see you, as you had asked me to do. I was told you had a caller, and I waited. The caller came away, and I met her in the lobby. She was Wanda Crowell. I knew her in Mexico. She told me that you were not going to be married."

The look in Martha's eyes should have withered him.

"And so," she said at last, actually trembling with anger, "you have brought me here—you have the effrontery—— Oh, but I wouldn't have believed that even you could be so contemptible as this!"

He flushed slightly.

"I don't blame you at all for feeling like this. Still, you haven't heard me out——"

"Heard you? Do you think you could have a single word to say to me now that I would stoop to listen to? Ah, you have hated me for a year, but even if I had given you any cause for hating me, how could you—— Oh, it's unbelievable! It's unimaginable!"

"But, Miss Dare, you are quite wrong. My motive certainly isn't hate. It's something very different. The fact is, I should like to help you to a fine piece of revenge."

"Revenge? On whom? And how is it possible for you to say such a thing to me, and at such a time?"

"As to time, I haven't any choice. It has to be now. And as you've been analyzing me somewhat, permit me the same privilege. It seems to me you are not a girl to let anything such as happened yesterday overwhelm you very long. It was a woman full of superb scorn I saw come into the lobby just

now. But even a proud, independent woman like you knows that sometimes scorn should be shown as well as felt."

"Yes; but what use to show it," she said, fixing her eyes on him unwaveringly, "if the object of it can't see it?"

"You mean me, of course. But I was speaking of *him*. Are you not going to show him how completely he has lost you? And the way to show him that is for you to become Mrs. Will Sheldon, after all. Miss Dare, I am very solemnly asking you to be my wife."

"I think," and she put her hand to her head, "I have gone mad."

"But is it so fantastic? To me it just seems that you are a young lady of initiative, able to extricate yourself from predicaments. Your marriage to Will Sheldon has practically taken place, in the eyes of the world. Even the morning papers spoke of it. Though it's easy to show a newspaper its typographical error, to point out that it is the Manila Sheldon you are marrying, and that the Alaska Sheldon is marrying Miss Wanda Crowell." He ignored her exclamation. "In this way, every one is appeased, and no one comprehends the exquisite irony except the man who is its victim."

As if she could not believe her ears, Martha stared at him. Suddenly she started to leave the park. But he restrained her, and something mesmeric about him made her go on listening to him as in a nightmare.

"If you married me, we would simply go away. What a turning of the tables! The very thing that ought to appeal to a girl of your spirit and daring!"

"And so," said Martha, "you are actually proposing for me to revenge myself on a man I despise by marrying a man I hate? For you know that I have no liking for you."

"Well, I don't mind that so much, for, after all, you don't really know

me. And, in fact, I hardly understand myself why I'm urging it. Perhaps fate is propelling us together. But I have never had you out of my mind since we met there in Manila, and it may be that you have thought of me oftener than you wished. We might come to care for each other. If not, we could be divorced. And there wouldn't be even an ethical offense in that, because, until we knew that we did care, everything would be as it is now between us. Except that we should be better acquainted, I hope. But you needn't decide to-night. Tomorrow morning—"

"To-morrow morning I shall have left San Francisco."

"Ah? In that case, so shall I."

"You cannot mean that you would follow me?"

"Precisely."

"Oh, this is unendurable! I could have you arrested for this!"

"What? 'Miss Martha Dare has had Mr. Will Sheldon arrested.' How would that sound? No, you can't do that."

Martha had paled.

"Mr. Sheldon, I am imploring you to go, and never to try to see me again. Maybe, if things had turned out differently in Manila, we might have been friends, and it may be my fault that it wasn't so, but now you are only a torture to me. Your very name, your knowing my secret—everything associated with you is extremely distasteful, and I can only marvel that you don't see all this without my telling you."

"This is a purely conventional Miss Dare speaking," was his calm reply. "But I suppose we all have a conventional self that manages to poke out its head now and then. I had one in the Philippines, when I went off to the provinces instead of staying in Manila and trying out our destiny there. Now fate has thrust us together again.

Think of it—that perhaps we are to care for each other! Who knows? But, at any rate, think of the simple drama of it. He, arriving to-morrow afternoon, finds registered at the Rutgers Mr. and Mrs. Will Sheldon. He learns that Mrs. Sheldon had registered yesterday as Miss Martha Dare, from Manila. He tries to find you. You and your husband have left the city. He does not know for where."

Martha stood like a statue.

After a deft silence he added, "We could be married to-night."

She faced him, white.

"And you would marry a woman who would never, never be anything to you but a hollow, meaningless name?"

"The woman being Martha Dare, I would risk that about the hollow, meaningless name. Remember, I still believe destiny is in this. But until destiny shows us, we are to be as we are now. See, now—the conditions are not so difficult. And after all," he said slowly, after a pause, "your last name, at present, is *Dare*."

She was about to walk up and down, but she stopped almost at once. He saw that she had in that fraction of time consented.

"I'll go and get the license," he said.

They were married at nine that night.

They registered at the hotel, and he got a suite.

After sending out the announcements, they planned where to go. They decided on stopping off at places of interest. New York on, I shall mention except as an indefinitely ultimate goal.

"I have two hundred dollars, and you must take it," she said, and he assented. "Later on, I shall nurse, of course, so I can pay you back whatever I owe you."

"Don't worry," he answered. "It would be a long time before I could feel any financial embarrassment." And then she remembered having heard

that he had an income besides his salary.

He said good night and retired to a room separated from hers by two smaller rooms.

She took a sleeping powder, and in half an hour had escaped from the whirling thoughts that she dared not face, now that she began to realize what she had done.

## II.

They were at the Grand Cañon.

They had arrived in the afternoon and taken rooms at El Tovar. She had remained in hers with a headache.

At about nine, he came to ask her how she was, and she saw that he had brought fruit and some books.

"I'm much better, thanks. Did you go to see the sunset?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I did, like a regulation tourist. But at least I had a nook to myself, where I didn't hear a single rhapsodic squeal, male or female. I was thinking you might have a choice about a trip to-morrow—although, by the way, there isn't the slightest hurry, you know. We can be as leisurely as we like. I hate this rushing at scenery, don't you?"

"Yes. But I think you had better choose."

He brought out some maps.

"Well, they recommend first a trip along the rim—something equivalent, I fancy, to a jaunt in a sight-seeing wagon. How does that strike you?"

"Is it a ride?"

"Yes, auto."

"Oh, no, please! That is—I'd so much rather walk at first. I'm nearly dead for exercise. But you take the auto trip."

"I'm not keen for it. Suppose we both hang around a day or two. We can walk, as you say—though, by the way, the walks aren't as short as they seem, by any means. Things look so near, and you find out they're dum-

foundingly far. But that would break us in for the horseback rides. That's the way the sensible ones are going at it—that crowd that came with us from Williams, for instance."

Martha immediately saw that this plan would let them make acquaintances, which meant that they could get away from each other. She asked to look at the booklets, and he told her what he had already gleaned about some of the routes. She watched him a moment as he bent over the maps. It was one of the moments when their travesty of intimacy struck her with full force, and at such times she could have screamed. She thought that he, too, often felt as taut, as witness his sudden reflex just now, when his sleeve brushed hers and he deftly stepped a little farther away. Yes, the sooner they plunged into the midst of people, the better.

When he was going away with the maps, he stopped by the door and said:

"By the way, I've got a pile of blankets, and I'm going to sleep out under the pines. There's a sort of natural dormitory. The air ought to be pretty fine."

The nurse in her made her say, "That's a good idea. In fact, you already look better than you did in Manila."

"Every one runs down in the tropics," he said as he went out.

She had determined not to take sleeping powders to-night. She must learn some time to face her situation, even in the dark. She had already formulated her plan for outward conduct, and that was never to show him that she regretted her step, that she despised herself for a fool. No, he must believe that she felt herself to be getting out of their bargain just what she had expected to get out of it, and this attitude had already helped her to hide the tumultuous emotions that so often

surged in her when the horrible truth would break upon her.

On the other hand, he helped by his very indifference. To-night she took courage, with the prospect of a morrow of physical activity and human encounters. Here was just the place for them, where strangers came and went, all taking one another casually. She was glad that he wanted to be leisurely in their stay.

Possibly the air was accountable, but at any rate she was soon as soundly asleep as if she had taken the powder.

The morning light came blindingly into her room. She awoke to a sense of vigor and even eagerness. She chose a linen suit and went to breakfast looking very smart. In fact, all the dining room was soon observing her. Across from her was the party that had come from Williams, an attractive, quiet man with his stout, kindly wife, a thin, energetic woman, and a third woman who might have been the younger sister of the man, a dark and very handsome girl, also rather quiet. Martha exchanged smiles with them.

When she was half through breakfast, Sheldon joined her, wearing a sweater and a cap already familiar to her from the boat days. She complimented him on his color.

He looked at her and said:

"Then it's the air. You are magnificent this morning. The other guests are telling you so with their eyes."

Presently five people took a nearby table, evidently reserved for them. Instantly Martha knew that here lay her goal. There were two women, both handsome, and three men of dissimilar types, and all were gay and smart and cosmopolitan.

The telepathy that works upon unconscious mortals made these people exchange glances with Martha and Sheldon. Two of the men continued observing Martha, especially the reddish-



haired one, a man of thirty-five, who gazed from under his brows, as if shyly, though probably the shyness did not exist. Martha, who had meant to go out to the rim, now lingered with Sheldon, asking questions. Thus they happened to leave the dining room at the same time as the quieter party of four, and Sheldon, who had already talked with them, paused; so they all spoke, and then started together to see the view.

All but Martha had seen it before, yet they fell silent. And it was Martha herself who broke that silence.

"It's too terrific!" she said nervously, and then, seeing Sheldon's gaze on her, she was sure it was mocking, and out of defiance she began to chatter. She had a feeling that this spectacle beneath them was one of the profound experiences of his life; therefore, she treated it lightly.

Presently the dark young woman, whom they called Louise, went a little apart, and Sheldon joined her, and then Martha heard him using geological terms, which his companion apparently understood.

A little later, the party of five was seen coming toward the point.

Whether these two groups would have mingled or not without the agency of Martha's eyes and the curiosity of the reddish-haired man, is doubtful. But as it was, they smiled and spoke, and after an hour of view-taking, Martha found herself amalgamated with him of the sandy hair. Of the party of four, only the dark young woman remained, and she and Sheldon continued apart—probably, thought Martha, talking geology. Of the party of five, doubtlessly none appreciated what they were seeing. Indeed, they gave themselves no chance, but chattered all the time, particularly the very handsome woman, who was amazingly and piquantly voluble. A prolonged walk kept them all out until noon, and

it was as four pairs that they sauntered back to the hotel.

The five, who were mostly New Yorkers, were making an auto trip that afternoon, and the Sheldons were asked. Martha, forgetting her prejudice against rides, accepted, and she did not suppose Sheldon would be lonely, as the supply of geology was inexhaustible, and also, evidently, the interest of the dark young woman.

By night they all knew one another's names. A moonlight horseback ride was gotten up, and this time Sheldon and Louise Raefield—that was the name of the dark young lady—joined in. Martha, meantime, was marveling at her fortune. These people were all staying as long as they liked, and she foresaw many days in that gay company. They were the sort to whom money means nothing, or sudden affiliations, like that of Martha's and Kane Ward's, the reddish-haired man—or, again, that between Sheldon and Louise Raefield. Perhaps one of the women, the piquant one, was a little jealous of Martha. On the other hand, both these women would have liked the attentions of Sheldon, but he was a little more adroit than they, and kept his path to Miss Raefield clear.

Martha had noticed that other women at the hotel had shown an interest in her husband. She was scornful of them. "Let a man openly despise women, and they run after him," she thought. Still, he was not openly, or perhaps otherwise, contemptuous of the Raefield girl. "But he singles her out to show how empty I am, by contrast." And the devil that lived in her these days made her act doubly frivolous whenever she thought Sheldon could see.

Rides, walks, auto trips filled the three or four days that followed. All of them, except Martha and Sheldon, had already been down to the river, so that trip was not a factor yet.

At the end of one of their night rides, Martha, on reaching her room, realized that she had not seen Sheldon since afternoon. She wondered if he and Louise Raefield were still together, or whether he had gone out with his blankets to sleep under the pines.

Her feeling was one of fierce triumph. She knew what he thought of her—a woman who would marry a man she didn't know, to spite a lover, and then forget both in a flagrant flirtation with a chance acquaintance. She took the keenest pleasure in showing him just the sort of bargain he had made. Let his mockery show in his eyes; it would be something stronger, presently, when he knew that he had fallen in love with that Raefield girl. Then he would be sick enough of his bonds, and she would keep on reaping the benefits, benefits he had thrust on her there in San Francisco. It greatly pleased her to picture him gnashing his teeth as she had so often gnashed hers.

And then the eternal enigma confronted her: Why had he wanted to marry her? Had he believed that he loved her? Impossible. Was it physical attraction? And that attraction, had it waned before this other woman's? Yes, let him want this other woman! Let him want her!

She swung around, hearing his knock.

"Ohr, I fancied you were out under the pines."

"I'll not keep you, but I saw your light, and I'm after my blankets." He got them from his room.

"You've had a pleasant evening?" she asked.

"Well, 'pleasant' is rather a thin word for hereabouts."

"Oh, excuse me. I should have said 'inspiring'."

"That's a tourist word. May I light my cigar?"

"Do. But, you see, I'm only a tourist. You mustn't judge me by lofty

standards—such as that lovely Louise Raefield."

He lit his cigar, making no answer. She smiled at him.

"I'm so grateful to you for bringing me here. I adore the cañon, don't you?"

"Well, I guess it was as good as another place, for our purpose."

"You mean our getting acquainted?"

"Yes."

"Yes, by now we do understand each other a bit, don't we?"

He put down his blankets and came toward her.

"Martha," he said, "I'm beginning to believe that I have done you a great wrong."

Her shock at his calling her Martha was lost in the surge of triumph at his next words. But she asked innocently:

"Why, what do you mean?"

"That perhaps I ought not to have persuaded you to marry me."

She got out of her chair. Her eyes were aflame, but he would take that flame for anger, not victory.

"What are you saying? My God, do you mean—do you mean that you want to be free?"

"I want *you* to be free. I'm afraid I may have ruined your whole life." He looked full at her, and she tried to read that piercing gaze.

"But," she cried, "I can't believe it! I can't possibly believe you mean—Why, you have made me your wife, and in a week's time you— Oh, it's horrible! Because you have met another woman, you would turn me adrift and pile *this* humiliation on top of the other—that other you pretended you wanted to rescue me from."

He came nearer, watching her closely.

"Would you feel so terribly? You aren't very cleverly acting a part, out of the malice you keep for me in such a bountiful supply?"

And then she knew that she could not deceive him. She stopped acting her useless part.

"So you love this girl, and you'd like to be free. Well, I shan't free you! You gave me the shelter of your name, and I'm going to keep it till I'm ready to give it up. You let me tangle myself in this net of my own spite. You made me do the most contemptible and paltry thing I ever did in my life, and now we're going to see who's the gamest in keeping this bargain *you made!* As for me, it would be easier to leave you than to stay with you, but we've started now, and we'll finish—unless you're a piker. Yes, unless you're a piker."

He looked at her, saying nothing. Gradually the smile she hated came to his face.

"Martha, if you could love as you hate, you'd have a wonderful life. Some day you may learn how."

She clenched her hands.

"What? I? I, who am as empty as froth and foam? Oh, surely you mistake! You overestimate my attributes most painfully!"

He was still smiling as he went out.

The next day the inevitable happened—inevitable because of the pace at which the flirtation had gone. Indeed, she had known already that Kane Ward was just one of a hundred men who had made love to her in that way. After the scene with him, in which, for her, she had been strangely quiet, she felt an unexpected self-disgust. Why had she gone about with that crowd? Well, yes, to keep her mind off herself, and to escape an intolerable situation. But there were other people she could have mingled with, a little more conventional, perhaps, but after all—and, indeed, for that very reason—people more of her own sort. For she wasn't loose; she had standards.

A great restlessness assailing her, she went out and found a solitary place

on the rim of the cañon. Now, viewing the chasm in solitude, she knew that her other visits had profaned it, and had cheapened herself. Why had she acted as if she were insensible to nature? She had not been like that on the boat, with the spectacle of the sea before her. But here she had acted like a silly schoolgirl, or a feather-brained woman of the world—in short, like the people she had been with.

She saw herself lacking all dignity. It would have been better to have sought forgetfulness in contemplating this marvel. She contemplated it now, and something came to her mind of what the nice man of the quiet party of four had said about the patience of nature. She felt so cheap and insignificant that she went back to the hotel, but toward evening, quite as restless as before, she again sought the rim, and this time her mood was one of profoundest gloom and despair. It would have been unspeakably grateful to her to cry, but tears were an outlet almost unknown to her. In her self-pity, she wondered if any one in all the earth were as wretched as she.

She had not thought of the sunset until it began. When she realized what was happening, her first feeling was one of recoil, of the unworthiness of her being there. Then was wrought in her the miracle of forgetfulness of self, because, before such a revelation, there can be no thought of self, but only a state of watching and of fear and, to some, of rapture.

A special revelation—no. That outspreading wonder had nothing to do with the mortal insect. What went on had its own inscrutable meaning. Without understanding, she saw wrought in colors the rise and fall of kingdoms, the trooping of armies, the conquests of heights and depths, the births of temples and cities and their decay and ruin, wars, processions, revelleries, poms. Here combat attained

to glory; there glory was becoming peace; there peace had already sunk to desolation. Above some chasm of darkness, a point flashed to heavenly triumph. Yonder came, trooped by in clash and pride, and were forgotten, dynasties of reds, violets, blues. These were as sounds, too, here as an orchestration, there as a chorus, again as a single instrument or a voice of pure exaltation or a scarcely heard sigh. The all of past time was unrolling the all of history. And the river, the creator, was unseen in its depths, a deity whose terrible strength were buried in the silence it had made to keep itself secret, so that its work might go on and on.

Only as dusk came, hiding it all very, very slowly, did Martha stand up and breathe again. She was appalled, afraid.

There was still light on the rim, and it was now that she remembered some gorgeous red flowers on the ledge beyond the parapet. Yes, there they were, as if they waited for her to see them. "We are fellow things, as insignificant as you, and as lonely," they seemed to say, and in a sort of need of taking with her something intimate and helpless, she climbed the parapet. She was gathering the flowers when she slipped and fell over the ledge.

She landed on another ledge, wider, but just too far down for her to escape. What to do? She hated to call. Perhaps she could find a way— But no; there was no way. She was trapped. Well, she could stay out—though the nights did get very sharp. But her sweater was thick. An hour passed, and she saw that the stars no longer lighted the sky because a storm was coming from the east. To remain poised, as it were, over that awful gulf, to see it illumined by lightning—

"Still, I'm not absolutely a coward. Come, Martha, let's make the best of it!"

All at once her heart was in her mouth. Some one was calling. Yes, there it was again—"Martha!"—and the voice was Sheldon's.

She made no reply. Again he called, nearer.

"Yes, here I am—here!"

It seemed but a second before he was on the ledge above.

"Good God, where are you? Are you hurt?"

"No, not a bit, but I can't get back."

"My God, child!" She saw him now against the sky.

"All I need is a rope—and my c-coat."

"And you're not hurt?"

"Not a scratch. I was getting flowers."

"But it's beginning to rain. I'll run for a rope."

"And my coat!" she called after him.

He was back before she would have believed it possible.

"I'll tie it up here and come down for you."

He had already thrown down her coat, for the storm was just bursting furiously. Then he had slid down the rope and was beside her. The ledge above sloped back, making a roof at one end, and he thought they had better wait there. The thunder soon ceased, but the rain came in torrents.

"And you've been out here since sunset?" he asked presently.

"I suppose I was a fool—but, strange to say, I had an attack of appeal of nature."

"It isn't strange to say. On the boat, you were often very deeply moved, for I used to see you that way."

"How did you find me?" she asked after a silence.

"Well, Martha—perhaps the same fate led me here that brought me from Manila with you, and that took me to your hotel when Wanda Crowell was there—the fate that impels us together, for weal or woe."

She was again silent. Then she said:

"I don't want it to be for woe, mine or yours. To-morrow I'm going to tell Louise Raefield everything, and I'm going to free you——"

"Louise Raefield? Good heavens, we're not in love! Why, she's engaged to a Boston man."

"But you——"

"Absolutely no! Though it was very fine of you to want to do it. Don't laugh, don't be ironical! In the first place, it isn't being *you*." He began to light a cigarette, and the sound of the rain torrent filled the pause. "Why can't we speak frankly for once, Martha?" he said at last. "You see, I may have been to blame for all our misunderstanding. But I had promised to let you alone—and I wanted to, too, because I thought perhaps you'd come to like me of your own will."

"Why," she asked, "did you come on my boat?"

"Why? Well, why did I come back from the provinces just in time? I didn't know you were to go home then. That's why I say fate seems to be in it."

"But on the boat you avoided me."

"You were engaged to another man."

"Then—then you must have known something of what was to happen. Wanda Crowell had written you——"

"Good heavens! That's nonsense! Oh, outwardly it's all very fortuitous, I know. But, Martha, you have always lured me. I haven't known just why. But I've always seemed to see a you within *this* you—a some one who vanished when I came near and inevitably reappeared when I left you. Oh, I had my night of it, too, that night after Wanda Crowell talked to me. And I didn't pump her. She poured it all out, like vitriol! Then I argued that propinquity would bring the ac-

cidental revelation." He paused. "But you hated me too much."

"And last night, then, when you wanted to free me, you had seen it was all hopeless?"

"I thought I'd seen it. Now I think I was wrong."

"What? But you——"

"Wait, Martha. After all, what chance *have* you given me?"

"Then why did you sneer when you went out?"

"Sneer?"

"You smiled so mockingly——"

"Mockingly? You're wrong, utterly. If I did smile, it was because of a feeling—well, that your hate had reached its climax. It's not your nature to keep on hating. Martha, why shouldn't we have this chance to find out?"

She drew away. And then, without warning, she was crying.

When she looked up, he was lighting another cigarette.

"Are you sure you're warm enough? Then we might as well stay here till the rain eases up."

Something in his tone mesmerized her. She leaned against the sloping rock wall, and he began to tell her of his experiences in the provinces.

Two hours later, she fell asleep.

She awoke as the three o'clock dawn was coming into the clear sky. Sheldon stood out on the ledge, and she, too, came out, standing a little apart from him, and they watched the sunrise miracle spread from rim to rim.

Last night's wonders were repeated—but how differently! Here were the same colors, the same troopings, but swifter, more tumultuous, and unspeakably joyful. And it was not a terrible past unfolding, but the day's whole future—light kissing the pinnales and bathing their flanks, flooding that world with hope, activity, life. It was intimate, now; it flaunted for *her*, sang for her, beckoned her. The

depths still held deep shadows, but the day's light would penetrate them, too. The sun that climbed to the sky's center would look down into those dark places, and on unknown slopes, by a thousand little cataracts, flowers would shake the wet from them and grow and give off perfume and be hosts to the bees.

There were flowers here, too, the flowers Martha had dropped last night in her fall. They were fresh and fragrant.

"Oh, I want to keep them!" she cried, taking them up.

He was fixing the rope for their ascent.

"See," she said, and pointed to the river, to the one spot so remote and deep where the torrent, soundless and even moveless from here, could be glimpsed—yes, more than a mile below as a stone is dropped from the sky.

"We might go down to-day?" he suggested.

"Yes, so we might. But not with noisy people." She flushed.

"Yes, they go down so brashly. I don't think they find what's there." And after looking at it a moment, he added, "It's been calling me ever since we came. Yet to go alone—well, somehow I didn't want that."

"And last night," she said, "I didn't know I could ever go down to it. The sunset—I was terrified. But now—well, I'm really very brave in daylight."

"We'll have to stay all night. There's a big camp."

"To stay so close to it? All night? But still, it seems to call me. I'm afraid to be cowardly, I think."

He negotiated the rope ascent. At the hotel, he secured an early breakfast and a special guide.

They started down.

Mid-afternoon of the next day, they were coming up the trail.

They had stopped to rest, and the guide, a man of intuition, had wandered away to take some views with Sheldon's camera.

Martha went to the edge and looked down into the gorges, and, thinking of those they had threaded, her mind went back to the river itself. She had stayed in the sound of its roar all through the darkness of last night, and now she thought of how she had dared so much.

"I've always been afraid of the deep things." It seemed to her that a new self had pushed its way through the old self, leaving an empty, vain shell. And she might never have emerged but for the river and—

Well, would she ever have gone to the river but for *him*?

Oh, the deep, terrible river that goes on and on, in the chasms of earth, making what it must make—which some call a spectacle, others a phenomenon, but whose right name may be soul.

"Martha!"

She turned. Sheldon, hatless and coatless, his tanned face toward her, was beckoning with a tin cup of water from a spring.

She went to him, drank, and gave back the cup, looking into his brilliant dark eyes.

He kept her hand. She trembled a little.

"Martha, I loved you in the tropics. And I followed you across the ocean. But I can see that the fates were keeping this for the place where I am"—he was drawing her to him with irresistible arms—"to claim you. Yes, here I am claiming you, Martha. And here you can't get away. You will never get away. You are mine."

"Will!"

She was weak in his embrace, until his kiss burned her into flaming response.

When the guide returned, they started on up the trail.





# The Stone Serpent

By Paul Hervey Fox



IN a mood of depression one night, Nicholas Serle had exclaimed bitterly to himself: "What an insufferable, romantic ass I am!"

And in a way he was not far wrong.

When he was very young and foolish, he had had literary aspirations and, with the hope of furthering them, had entered a publishing house. "The pressure of circumstances" developed in him after a few years the promise of proving a very excellent man of business. The cost of paper and the most efficient methods of distribution came, somewhat to his own regretful surprise, to seem almost as important as an avoidance of split infinitives. But a hint of his earlier absurdity stepped in, now and then, to remind him that he had once had a temperament.

It was when he was most sure of that possession, and the year before he entered his publishing firm, that he came to know Marie Pattison.

In those days, Nicholas, after a morning spent in writing bad plays, used to lunch in a little obscure restaurant downtown, where a bottle of red wine and a sanded floor did much to create for him the atmosphere of his illusions. A soft, careless hat and a black string tie gave him, he hoped, an air of the artist. He regretted that he did not know more people.

He began to notice that one of the regular patrons of the little restaurant

was a girl with blue-black hair with a sheen in it. He wondered about her, built around her a pretty, impossible romance, and tamely ended by smiling at her. The smile was returned, and the next day, rising to leave at the same time that she did, Nicholas found himself exchanging a few casual words in the doorway.

He was not disappointed; he was elated. Her voice was very rich in quality, and her smoldering gray eyes seemed to bespeak a personality of some depth. Before all these allures, Nicholas admitted himself helpless.

She was a very new woman, and he was a very young man. Her newness was at once delightful and shocking to Nicholas. He used to take tea with her informally in her studio—she made certain cloudy pretensions to being a student of music—and he found it delicious to talk solemnly of matters which the merest difference in presentation would have rendered material for a barroom *causerie*.

In due course they became engaged, for, as Marie pointed out, it was quite possible to be a revolutionist in theory and yet trick the world by a hollow air of agreement with its codes.

Then, two days before they were married, Nicholas conceived the idea of the pact.

He rather thought it would appeal to her. She insisted so ruthlessly on a cold

and unsentimental viewpoint of poor human nature. For instance, she appeared to take for granted a long line of mellow *affaires* in his past, and Nicholas did not dare disillusion her. Much as he regretted it, his life had been blameless to a degree.

It happened that they were talking about the deceptions that exist in the less rarefied layers of domesticity.

"A husband should be brutally frank with his wife, and a wife with her husband," Marie declared. "Only in that way can there exist between them the highest spiritual relationship."

"But very often," Nicholas objected, "frankness isn't the very best thing. I mean, each person is too near a certain situation to see it clearly or fairly, and so can't speak honestly of it. But I agree with you, of course, theoretically. Why shouldn't there be, say, various periods marked out for frank confession, and a new basis adopted, if one were required, at each period?"

"How?" asked Marie. She held her head very gracefully; the light came over one shoulder and picked out silken lights in the blue-black hair.

Nicholas generally started sentences without knowing how they were going to end, which is the way of theorists the world over. And now, speaking at random, he created the idea of the pact.

"Well, see here," he began slowly, "suppose a couple—people like ourselves, say—were to promise to tell each other truthfully, after a certain number of years, everything that each had hidden from the other during that time. It would be impossible at the times themselves to say anything very pertinent. All sorts of emotions would complicate confession. But later on, and from a better angle, they could talk things out and adjust themselves fairly to new conditions. In that way they could keep their love always live and vigorous."

For the barest stir of breath, Nicholas

thought that the expression of the gray eyes into which he was staring was just a trifle odd. But when she spoke, a moment later, to indorse the idea, his impression vanished.

Nicholas was in a glowing mood; he felt keen and brilliant. He found himself impulsively suggesting that such a pact form part of their union. And, standing up, gazing down at her profoundly, stiffening his fingers into a theatrical tenseness, he heard her agree to the project.

This was to the effect that on the fifth anniversary of their wedding they were to stand upon their pledge and say truly whether they had been faithful, each unto each.

When the thing was over, and Nicholas let himself out into the night, he wondered uncomfortably whether he had been a howling ass or whether he had done something rather fine and splendid.

Being a little of the former, he finally decided that it was the latter.

## II.

The pact, like many other lovers' pacts, might very easily have faded out of memory, but a series of circumstances conspired to keep it alive.

For one thing, it was intimately connected with their honeymoon period; it stood out as one of the landmarks of first, vivid impressions. Then Nicholas, after a year of forgetfulness, suddenly decided to revive it in the rôle of a matrimonial joke; and in this service it became squeezed and juiceless.

Time brought lovers' quarrels that were all quarrel and no love. There were little trivial things that Marie was foolishly mysterious about, and one obstinate occasion when Nicholas refused to say where he had been very late at night. The fact that he had been occupied innocently stirred his resentment at her sharp curiosity. And the first

thing they knew, each was seriously saying to the other on such occasions:

"Well, in three years you will have to tell me. I shall remember to ask, mind!"

Finally Marie was able to assume a mere irritating expression when things went wrong, which referred very clearly, Nicholas perceived, to their private day of reckoning. The pact began to grow in their vision, began to take on a huge, shadowy significance in the background of their lives.

Yet Nicholas, disillusioned as he was in the woman he had married, found in marriage itself many things that were admirable. He was naturally domestic, and he secretly preferred a secure, dull routine to a romantic uncertainty. To use his favorite word, Nicholas was adventurous only theoretically. He found himself becoming successful, and sighed sentimentally over his poor little dreams as he let them fly away, one by one.

In the year of his fifth wedding anniversary, Nicholas took his vacation early. Now that the pact was so very close at hand, he noticed that Marie rather ominously avoided all mention of it.

He had taken a remodeled farmhouse on the east bank of the Hudson, and as Marie liked lively company, he asked George Marford and his wife, Lilly, to come up for a week.

George Marford was a slightly dubious explorer whose books were issued by Nicholas Serie's firm. Yet, if some of his discoveries and stories were a little fishy, he was, at any rate, a fine, careless talker, and very much alive. Nicholas, who was naturally quiet, would have preferred a more slumberous visitor, but he knew that Marie would enjoy the vicarious excitement of the explorer's personality.

And in all fairness, he, for his own part, was secretly flattered by the sub-

dued intimations that Lilly Marford had given him of his attraction for her.

When the Marfords came, they seemed to fill the old house with a loud, confused vitality. Marford, a big man with a round, rolling eye like an actor and a pair of straggling mustaches, never relaxed his curious energy for a minute. And Nicholas had to admit that he was an excellent raconteur.

Leaning across the table one night, his face defined like a poster, thick with gleams and shadows, under the pallid light, he spoke, with large gestures, of experiences among Malay islands.

Nicholas smoked his cigar thoughtfully. A bottle of wine from an old stock suffused him with a glow of pleasant, meditative melancholy. For a moment his attention wandered, and through the many-paned window, his eyes took in the panorama of the hills, purple against a rich dusk. A fly bullied the impassive screen with an angry, futile buzz. The sound of the insect multitude, busied about their interesting duties, rose soothingly upon the soft air.

His sauntering attention returned to the group around the informal dinner table—his wife deep in her chair, pondering the story with an inscrutable expression; Lilly Marford with pursed red lips, tiger-brown eyes, and a vivaciously poised head, alert as a bird's; Marford himself hugely enjoying his own powers, with one hand in reserve and the other accenting his swift, colorful sentences.

"And there you have the picture—myself on that hot, barren beach, with the dory rocking in the shallows, and the niggers pounding into a run and hurling their spears at the small of my back. One ping-pinged past my ear and took a header into the sand. You could hear the shaft hum in a sort of funny, musical way as it trembled in the shock. But I didn't stop to listen. Not that I don't like music. I minded

sharks less than saying how do you do politely to that pack behind me, and I swam kickingly out to the dory and made her. And so I pulled out to the *Lady Bird* and went aboard, with the stones all safe in my pocket."

He paused and, with provoking leisu-  
reliness, struck a match to a cigarette. Then he concluded in a rush:

"And the stones? The little green stones shaped like serpents? Emeralds, you're thinking? Not a bit of it, my friends! Nothing except a fairly rare lagoon formation that the natives used in their tribal love rites. The man, having caught the woman, gives her one in token. And her acceptance of a stone serpent implies in turn the acceptance of his rather careless affection. But they were all the treasure I was after. I wanted them for my collection, and that, you see, is the way I bought them."

Nicholas came back to reality with a start, and his gaze fell upon Marford with considerable respect. The man, by a trick of voice, had created an atmosphere for him. A moment back, Nicholas had been on a glaring white beach with the low roar of a tropic surf in his ears. In this comfortable hour, he thought of Marford's life with a pang of envy; the fellow might be a mountebank and a charlatan, but he had lived in many places and known many men, villains and braggadocios and tragic, reckless spirits.

"Interesting!" murmured Nicholas. "I'd like to have seen that fight. And the stones themselves must be valuable curios. Do the natives grind them into a serpent shape or are they that way naturally?"

"Humph!" ejaculated Marford with a start of recollection. "I believe I may have some with me. I've a habit of carting around, wherever I go, a box of fossils and odd bits. Remind me to look before I leave, if you're interested."

But he apparently required no such reminder, for he came to Nicholas after breakfast the next morning, just as the party was preparing to start upon an all-day picnic, with one of the little green stones in his hand.

It was very pretty—a slim, polished chip about an inch in length, and in the shape, as Marford had said, of a minute serpent. Tiny fibers were laced around the center like a girdle, and these extended into a wide loop, as if the trinket were designed for use as an anklet. Nicholas handled it with attention and respect. Lilly Marford leaned against his shoulder a little, carelessly, as if to obtain a better view.

"My dear fellow," said Marford grandiloquently, "won't you take this one as a gift? I have several more, you know."

Nicholas protested that he couldn't possibly accept the offer, and ended by expressing his appreciation and dropping it into his pocket. Then he turned to clap on a cap and encumber himself with a luncheon hamper.

The picnic was to be celebrated across the river, chiefly to give the expedition a larger tang of adventure. A wheezy old ferry, which remembered a brave harbor in its youth, carried the party over to a desolate landing where a bus met ordinary passengers for an inland town.

The countryside was pleasantly lonely, and wooded heights jutted upon an irregular landscape. By noon a luncheon that comprised such familiar picnic ingredients as cold chicken, mashed fruit, and Thermos bottles of coffee and punch, found a picnic appetite to deal with it. And after the men had lounged and smoked a while, Nicholas suggested a stroll. Marie and George Marford went ahead, and Nicholas stayed to escort Lilly over the hard places in the underbrush.

He had never guessed that she was so fragile. She appeared to shrink from

the most trivial obstacles in the way of fallen trees or creek beds. Nicholas was perpetually aiding her with a finger, with a hand, with an arm.

Far ahead of them, Marie and Marford were lost to view in the cool depths of the forest. Once or twice they halloed faintly from an indeterminate direction. Then Nicholas sent out a call that was answered only by the dim reverberation of the rocks.

He was standing upon an abutting ledge cushioned with moss. Back of him a summit of tangled green rose in a sheer face; below him flowed an undulating sweep of summer landscape.

"We've lost them," said Nicholas with a smile. "Well—never mind. We'll all meet again where we lunched, I guess."

"What a climb!" Lilly Marford murmured, her head turned provokingly from him. "Let's sit down. I want to catch my breath."

Suddenly Nicholas had a queer stir of satisfaction in being alone with her. She was interested in him, he knew, and the circumstance pleased his vanity. But he had no intention of permitting the spirit to grow. If she found him attractive, he was glad to commend her taste, but to encourage that attraction would be to make matters uncomfortable.

Yet somehow, on this velvety afternoon, in a place of solitude, he found it difficult to mingle sentiment with a mild austerity. She was so helpless and so charming. He liked the quick, bird-like movements of the little head, and liked her gift of understanding. In that sympathetic atmosphere, he talked in a strain of humorous pathos of his forgotten aspirations. He had begun a novel once, and he still remembered the first sentence, which had seemed to him at the time so flashing and so intuitive: "The man and the woman stared at each other with weird white faces in a silence that was more eloquent than speech!"

Lilly gave him a steady glance. "You're really a poet, aren't you?" she said.

Nicholas sighed sentimentally and went on talking. The sun moved patiently on its downward arc.

Half an hour later, he put his hand on his watch and then jumped to his feet with a start.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "Five-thirty, and the last boat leaves at six! I had no idea it was so late! We'll have to rush!"

The descent was arduous, and Nicholas felt that it would be brutal to ask her to hurry any faster. Besides, there was probably sufficient time if only they went ahead steadily without halting for rest.

They came upon the scene of their noon encampment, and one of the hampers had vanished.

"Hullo!" said Nicholas. "They've been and gone. But we'll manage to meet them at the landing, I guess." And he slung the straps of the remaining basket over his shoulder.

He wheeled at a little whimpering cry from Lilly, and saw her go down in a tottering stumble over a root. He lifted her to her feet in an instant. She confronted him with a white, painfully smiling face. Then she took a step forward and groaned.

"By Jove!" said Nicholas. "You've sprained your ankle!"

"No; only twisted it, I think."

For a moment he stood irresolute, admiring the pluck behind her trembling smile.

"I—I can walk slowly," she said.

Nicholas laughed out loud.

"Yes," he commented, "very slowly! I'm going to carry you, of course."

He strode over to her with a swiftness of impulse that astonished him. He caught up her light body, and she relaxed deliciously in his arms with a soft intake of breath.

Light as she was, Nicholas found his

progress from now on very slow and laborious. When he had reached the roadway, he put her down for a moment and, breathing heavily, unslung the luncheon hamper and let it fall. He would have to travel as lightly as possible. The woman in his arms was silent, he noted. She did not make him waste his wind in replies to foolish questions.

When, panting under his exertions, he swung around the curve of the highway and came out upon the beach front, Nicholas could not believe his eyes. Halfway across the river, the last ferry plowed equably homeward.

Nicholas had not allowed his mind to consider the chance of failure, and now that he was confronted with it, for a moment he was incapable of thought. Then he rapidly reviewed the situation.

The inland town was ten miles behind him; on either hand a rocky shore barred exploration; and on the beach itself there was no sign of any available craft, not even so much as a battered scow.

His gaze circled and fell upon the crumbling ruin of a deserted house. Broken, dingy panes, sickly white woodwork, and a litter of scrap iron before a gaping door held forth an ironic offer of hospitality. There was no other sign of habitation in that brooding landscape. In the falling light no sound was audible save the mild, rhythmic splash of the ripples upon the shore.

Nicholas glanced down at the woman in his arms.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said apologetically, "but I'm afraid we'll have to spend the night here."

Lilly Marford made no answer.

### III.

Nicholas dragged a dilapidated chair up to a hearth which alone did not bear signs of decay. He made Lilly com-

fortable, and then, while the light still served him, left to seek the picnic hamper he had earlier cast aside.

Happily the remains of luncheon had been considerable. When Nicholas returned with it, dusk had fallen over water and land, and the deserted house loomed uncertainly in the shadows.

He entered to find still another proof of Lilly Marford's quixotic courage. With the night, cool airs had come, and the sky had a look of dirty weather. She had, apparently, hobbled out after driftwood, and was laboriously settling it on the hearth as he stepped into the room.

He caught her arms and made her sit down. He was genuinely touched. And somehow his realization of her entire reliance upon him in the situation made him regard her with just the least tenderness.

The drummed-up dinner was a high success. As they ate and chatted beside the smoldering firewood, Nicholas felt as romantic as if he had been shipwrecked on some desert isle with her. A dark night seemed to render the prosaic to-morrow, accompanied by ferries and buses and civilized people, very far away.

"Sit there in that light," Lilly said once. "You look so nice in the fire-light."

And Nicholas was pleased to think that she thought he looked "nice." The evening wore on. Nicholas made a mental note of how astonishing it was that two people could still be so companionable after a whole day's intimacy alone.

There fell a silence between them after a time, a curious, breathing hush.

Suddenly Nicholas said idly:

"Your husband's a remarkable man. That story he told last night about the stone serpents, for instance. I'd like to have seen that."

His memory awoke, and he plunged his hand into his pocket and brought



out the specimen Marford had given him that morning. He examined it in the firelight.

"Let me see it, won't you?" said Lilly Marford.

She played with it idly for a moment, and tried it upon her wrist as a bracelet. Then she slowly lifted her head, and her somber eyes fell upon his.

"I'd like to ask you to give me this one," she said casually.

For a moment Nicholas found himself thinking it odd that she should ask him for the trinket when Marford had boasted of owning several. And after that, rather fantastically, certain sentences of the explorer's raced through his head:

"The man, having caught the woman, gives her one in token. And her acceptance of a stone serpent implies in turn the acceptance of his rather careless affection."

As if to shake off the preposterous fancy, he rose quickly. As he did so, he met her eyes in a steady gaze, and the situation stood up clear and sharp before him.

Some native spirit of domesticity, aggravated by timidity and a respect for social forms, must have pulsed in his blood. His hand went out in a groping, protective gesture. Almost as quickly, the woman sensed his reaction. She got to her feet and stepped coolly to the other side of the hearth. With high astonishment, Nicholas perceived that she walked without the slightest suggestion of a limp.

He turned and swung into the farther room, banging the rattletrap door behind him.

#### IV.

The day had carried a disturbing atmosphere. Marie had gone about very softly, and Nicholas had been silent and meditative. It was their fifth wedding anniversary, the day of the pact, and a morose and lowering Sunday. It was

late afternoon before anything happened, and it was Marie who took the initiative.

Nicholas looked up from a huddle of stupid Sunday papers to see her enter the room. She did not sit down, but stood before him expectantly. Nicholas returned her look, but did not speak.

"Well," said Marie at last, "I don't think it's necessary to explain why I'm here."

"No," Nicholas answered.

There was another silence.

"Why don't you begin?" Marie suggested ironically. "Or does your silence mean that you have lived an absolutely blameless life for five years?"

A surging impulse trailed through his blood. He had never thought of the pact save as a vague and not quite possible theory, and he was in no way prepared to go through with it practically. A knowledge of Marie's character, a recollection of her strange idea of him, crowded swiftly into his mind. He had always been too quiet for her; he had always hinted darkly at his past, and she had seemed, queerly enough, to prefer that picture of him to reality. Could he face her now and assert that his life had been serenely virtuous? Wouldn't she infinitely prefer a blacker account, for all that she might make a scene? Impulsively, without further consideration, Nicholas, the theorist, plunged into a fulfillment of the pact.

"Marie, I agreed to tell the truth. I shall tell it. I am not as bad as you think me. Only once have I been unfair. It was last summer—when the Marfords came—"

"Lilly Marford?" Marie's voice went up in a scream. "That night you stayed over on the other side of the river? And said you had missed the last ferry? Oh, you treacherous brute! You brute!"

Nicholas had never seen her in so terrific a passion. She was sobbing

with emotion; she had thrown aside every vestige of restraint. It came over him that he had made a sad ass of himself. The pact had been bad business all the way through, and he knew instinctively that the scene Marie was making was no mere flurry of anger or nerves. It would stand, an ugly blot, upon the half-written page of his marriage. Nicholas cursed himself in his heart, and some of his self-contempt found outlet in an irritable voice.

"What about you?" he asked. "You haven't given any information about yourself yet."

Marie swept to the door.

"The fact that you can even ask me

or suspect me only proves what a brute you are!"

It was annoying, her continued insistence on that one word, and his eyes, as he watched her make her way hysterically from the room, held a light of anger.

Their expression changed very suddenly, however, as she thrust out her hand to twist the doorknob. Her sleeve tangled somehow and lifted, showing a portion of her forearm. Nicholas caught just the barest glimpse of something bound tightly above her wrist, something green, like a slim, polished chip about an inch in length and shaped like a minute serpent.



## THE SPOILER

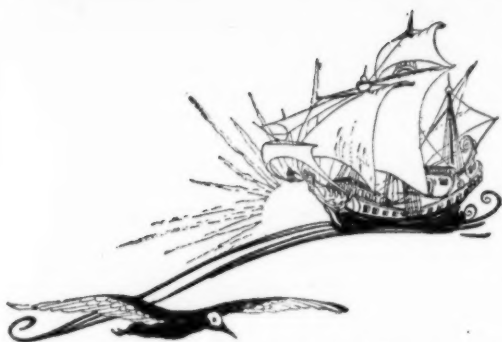
I THINK we two have lived a little hour  
 In some dead moon of time.  
 Was I the snowflake of a mountain shower—  
 A thing of frost and rime—  
 And you the petal of an Alpine flower,  
 Blown from a height sublime?

Was I a leaf upon a bitter tree,  
 On some lost isle,  
 Across a sullen, unremembered sea,  
 Known on no chart or map,  
 And you the chrysalis that fed on me  
 And sucked my acrid sap?

Were you the coolness of a desert well,  
 Where no sweet shadows were,  
 And dry lips ravened where the scarce dew fell  
 On sands sun-dried and bare,  
 And curses that the white god could not quell  
 Hung festering in the air?

Was I a wind upon that barren waste,  
 With birds' and beasts' and men's  
 Last anguish laden—  
 Did I, in frenzied haste,  
 With dust of poisoned fens,  
 Befoul your waters with a brackish taste  
 The white god could not cleanse?

LOLA RIDGE.



# The Joyous Dreamer

By Vennette Herron

Author of "When Sirens Clash,"  
"Lolita," etc.

## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Richard Montgomery, a young soldier of fortune, has succeeded in forming a company to develop a valuable property in Colombia. Richard and Lycurgus Robinson, through whose aid the necessary backing was secured, are to be in charge of the enterprise. There is little sympathy between the two men, Richard being an aristocrat of the aristocrats and Robinson a vulgar little bounder, but Robinson's wife, Alice, is madly in love with Richard. This is no new experience for him, as there has never been a time in his life when some woman was not in love with him. He himself is fundamentally indifferent to women, though he accepts their devotion for what it is worth to him. On the night before he and Robinson are to sail from Panama for Colombia in their little yacht, he catches a glimpse of a woman in black coming down the steps of the hotel. Her sophisticated beauty catches his fancy, and he regrets that he is leaving so soon that he will have no chance to meet her.

## CHAPTER V.

THE trip to Buenaventura, the first port of call below Panama, lasted two days and nights. The weather was bad, for it rained without ceasing, the wind blew steadily, and the water was decidedly rough; but, in spite of this, they made good time and came through without mishap.

Robinson was almost helpless during the entire voyage, for he suffered from *mal de mer*, which was greatly augmented by his panicky fear, and spent his time between cursing the sea and ships in general and inquiring anxiously after the progress and safety of their own boat in particular.

At Buenaventura they rested a day or two and then went on to Guapi, arriving there at dusk.

The town was set high on a bank, overlooking the Guapi River and about twenty miles from its mouth. Before

the village, at the foot of the hill, lay a gravel beach, washed clean by the swift waters of the river and covered with canoes drawn up for the night. A long flight of wooden steps led up to the town, which stood back of a line of coconut palms, like sentries at the edge of the bank. The main street ran along the water front and consisted of a row of more or less pretentious frame buildings, painted pink and blue and yellow, but dimmed by time and weather into the softest pastel tints.

The property in which Richard and Robinson were interested was located much farther up the river, but this was to be their headquarters. Robinson resumed his attitude of authority on land and undertook to dicker for a piece of ground on the river front, where they intended to build a house and to establish a permanent station for their company. This transaction dragged over several weeks without results.

Meanwhile, Robinson spent his time drinking and talking with the Spaniards.

Richard went ashore as seldom as possible. The town, which looked so fascinating and picturesque from the water, proved upon closer inspection to be filthy and squalid beyond description, nor had it the charm of novelty for Richard, who had explored it thoroughly some years before. The care of the boat took up much of his time, and the rest was spent in reading and dreaming.

If the town appeared picturesque by day, when seen from a little distance, it was a veritable city of dreams by night, for then a great white moon would rise and cast its spell, like a silvery veil, over the little place. All the colors would melt and blend into softer, paler tints, elusively beautiful, like the flesh of a woman glimpsed through gauze. Myriads of tiny charcoal fires glowed crimson against black shadows, and dark palms showed tall and straight against the sky. Now and then a girl's laugh would ring sweet and clear in the night, and there would come a snatch of some Spanish serenade, mingled with soft chords struck from a lover's guitar, while from far away would sound the monotonous throbbing of the tom-toms, swaying, rising, and falling—a shuttle that passed back and forth and in and out, weaving together the many-colored threads of the tropical night into the fabric of fantasy.

It was on such a night that Richard remembered the woman in black whom he had seen at the Tivoli, and began to wonder if what he saw would be visible to her if she were there with him.

One day he went into the village to hunt for a *lavandera*. He was directed to a hut on the very outskirts of the village in the midst of a group of mango trees. Back of it a clump of hibiscus bushes, heavy with blossoms, glowed

scarlet between the yellow poles upholding the little hut. An old hag, in a chemise of purple calico, squatted before her charcoal fire beneath the house, while just within its high doorway above the vine ladder, like a brilliant bird on its perch, sat a slender slip of a girl clad in a scarlet *camisa*.

Richard told his errand to the hag, but watched the girl, not because she was a girl, but because she made a picture that was pleasing to his eye.

"*Si, señor*, I can do what you wish, and Juanita can go to your ship and bring me back the things. *Venga, Juanita*," called the woman.

"*Si, mamá*," answered the girl, and swung herself down the ladder with the agility of a monkey.

"Go with the señor and return at once with his clothes, which I have promised to wash," went on the mother, and as she spoke, she winked slyly at Juanita—a sign that did not escape Richard's observation and that afforded him some amusement and not a little disgust, for he knew that it meant: "The señor is young, and some of his American gold may be yours without your half trying."

"*Si, mamá*," replied the girl again, with evident comprehension, and turned to flash a beaming smile upon Richard.

"*I spikka de Ingles un poco, señor*," she began, as she padded along, a pace behind Richard, with a basket for the clothes deftly balanced on her head.

"Do you?" he queried, without much interest.

There was silence for a space, but this did not suit Juanita, and her time would soon be up, for they were drawing near the beach. She resolved upon audacity.

"You think I am pretty, señor?"

"Juanita—that's your name, isn't it?—what a question! My dear, how can you ask?"

Juanita gurgled with delight, for the

Americano, as she thought him, had caught her fancy.

"If you will come back to my *casa* some time, I will give you much fruit—good fruit—and I myself will prepare it for the señor," she went on with coaxing coquetry.

But Richard made no promises. He was thinking how the men on the boat would chaff him if they caught sight of the girl. When they reached the shore, therefore, he himself went out to the yacht and sent the linen back by a *muchacho*.

He made no further attempt to see the girl, but she had served her purpose, for she had made him realize that, in spite of his inner resources, he was growing lonely, and again he recalled the unknown woman. She had been so attractive an example of the type that he most admired. He wondered if she would make a good companion, what she was interested in, what she could talk about, and what were her opinions upon certain vital things. Then he began to dwell upon her during his waking dreams and fashioned her mind to suit himself, so that she grew to seem like the comrade he firmly believed no woman capable of being. At last she invaded his sleeping dreams, and he realized, with amazement, that some thought of her occupied the greater part of his idle time. Still, "A dream does no harm," he thought, "and after a while I'm going to stop thinking about her and settle down to work." Nor did he ponder the significance of the fact that, for the first time, he was actually thinking and dreaming about a woman, instead of shutting her out to make place for his thoughts and dreams. Once, while reading, he cut out a little verse that he thought that she might like and put it away among his possessions, pretending whimsically that she was waiting in Panama for him to come back to her.

One day Juanita's small brother appeared, in his tiny canoe, at the side of the yacht. He brought, as an offering to Richard, a fine, plump hen which the girl had devoutly fattened for the sacrifice.

But it seemed that the hen was predestined to live, for even as the steward stood ready with his sharpened knife in hand, she set up a tremendous cackling and straightway laid an egg; whereupon, Richard seized her and, holding her aloft, announced that he was ready to defend her with his life, for he was inordinately fond of fresh eggs and had visions of a succession of delicious morning meals.

Thus it befell that the hen was tethered by one leg to one of the railing posts, and Richard gave orders that her comfort and safety were to be considered before all else. The bird seemed grateful, too—or it may have been merely the instinct of self-preservation; but be that as it may, she did lay an egg almost every day.

Richard sent profuse thanks to Juanita and a box of chocolate biscuits taken from the ship's stores, but did not go to see her until some days after the arrival of the hen. He rather expected to find her sulky in consequence, but to his astonishment she was radiant.

"I knew you would come, Señor Ricardo," she greeted him.

"How did you know?" responded Richard, a little bewildered.

"Because I know now how you think of me."

"Oh, I say, Juanita, how do you know that?"

"Did you like my gift, señor?"

"Of course—but what has that to do with it?"

"Ah, señor"—she clapped her hands—"they have tell me—my brother and one of the others, too, off your ship have tell me how you guard my present and will not have her kille'. She

was to eat, señor, but I am glad that you kept her—so that you might think of me."

"Oh, Juanita, Juanita!" gasped Richard, choking with laughter. "You funny little thing! You mustn't make me laugh so hard. I might have hysterics, you know."

"What is that, señor?"

"A form of illness. Just think—you might make me ill, *chiquita*."

"But you need have no illness because of me, señor, for I am ready to do whatever you wish," and she turned her big black eyes upon him, as she stood with one hand upon the ladder leading up into her bird cage of a house. Then she leaned toward him, still clinging to the ladder. "My mother and brother will not be here to-night. They have gone away to the hills," she said very softly. "I think you could climb this ladder if you try," and she gave it a little shake.

"Juanita," said Richard gravely, "you will certainly corrupt my morals, if I stay here much longer."

"Does that mean that you will come to-night, señor?"

"Perhaps," said Richard slowly. Then he went back to the yacht.

Richard deemed it churlish to refuse a gift which the donor was plainly eager to bestow, but he had a little prejudice against native girls which he hesitated to put aside. Still, it was pleasant to think that Juanita waited in the little hut among the mango trees, eager to welcome him if he should care to come.

That evening, and it was a moonlit one, Richard loitered on the deck, uncertain still whether to go ashore or to bed. He thought again of the woman in black and wondered how he would feel if she were waiting somewhere in the village, instead of the little Juanita. Far off the tom-toms began to throb, and a ripple of low laughter came to him out of the shadow.

Suddenly the sound of chanting rose from across the river. Then a light flashed out on the farther bank—and another—and another. Richard lounged against the rail, watching curiously. At length a black boat, wherein lights gleamed, detached itself from the blacker shadows and came gliding toward him over the moonlit water. This was followed by many others, while the chanting grew louder and louder as the boats drew nearer. Then he saw that it was a procession of canoes, each filled with natives, who carried lighted tapers and sang as they drifted on.

When they came nearer still, he saw that the padre occupied the foremost craft and that in the center of the line was a canoe larger than the others, within which lay a still figure wrapped in a winding-sheet of black lace. Flowers filled the sides of the boat, and at either end of the bier stood tall, lighted candles that flickered a little as they were rocked by the dip of the paddles. A smell of incense was wafted to his nostrils, as the canoes glided past one by one, and then came the grating and crunching of gravel as one after another they were drawn up onto the beach. Very slowly the light bearers ascended the stairs with that solemn black burden in their midst, and the chanting grew fainter and fainter, dying away in the distance, while the church bell tolled and the endless beat of the tom-toms seemed part of a weird death knell.

From the slow, impressive passing of the dead came forth the call to live. The night seemed more beautiful and the moment more precious because they, too, must pass, and with all his youth aflame, Richard slipped over the side of the yacht and rowed himself ashore, laughing happily as he thought of Juanita, waiting, soft and warm, in the dusk of her little house.

Days passed, after that, with plenty of joy and laughter, and the boy



dreamed no more of the woman in Panama.

As the weeks slipped by, however, Richard did grow impatient to proceed to the property. There seemed to be no further reason for delay, but still Robinson dallied. At last, there arrived a mysterious cablegram, addressed to Robinson, who then curtly informed his partner that they would return at once to Panama. Richard was dumfounded. He was not shown the cablegram and he could extract no satisfactory reasons out of Robinson, but received, instead, repeated assertions that everything was as it should be, that all would turn out for the best, that they would return almost immediately, but that it was absolutely necessary to go at once to Panama.

Richard was helpless, or, rather, his happy confidence in the ultimate beneficence of fate, coupled with his extreme aversion from unpleasant controversy, led him to acquiesce in a decision that he nevertheless knew to be folly. It was often so with Richard; he would work and fight, with incredible persistence and energy, to gain a point, and then would calmly throw away the result of months of labor for the sake of an evening's pleasure, or to escape an especially disagreeable interview, or because he hated to hurry his dinner.

His last night was spent on shore and, very early in the morning, Juanita accompanied him to the beach, where a *muchacho* waited with a small boat to take him back to the yacht. Together they stood for a few moments near the landing place.

"Señor Ricardo," began Juanita.

"Sí, *querida*?"

"You'll come back—some time—won't you?"

"You bet I will! I'm coming back soon, but if anything should happen so I can't return, I'll send you a lovely present."

"I wish you would take me with you."

"You would like a ride on the big boat? She is a beauty, isn't she?"

"I do not know about the boat, but I would like to go with you, Señor Ricardo," and she leaned toward him and gazed coaxingly into his eyes.

"Awfully nice of you," replied Richard absently, and shifted a bit uneasily. "I really have to go, *Juanita mia*. Good-by."

The men on the yacht were waving wildly to Richard, and Robinson was shouting through a megaphone that he was wanted on board, but Juanita put out both of her little brown hands and clung to him.

"You will mees me, Señor Ricardo?" she begged pathetically.

"Of course," said he, with one eye on the boat. "Of course, *querida mia*. How can you ask me? Good-by."

He made a dash for the tender, clambered in, and was rowed away.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Dickie, you'll have to go to mass to-night. I promised Mrs. Kennedy that I would, before I knew you'd be here. So now we'll all go. I asked her, and she said she'd be delighted to have you."

Richard was sitting with Alice Robinson and her husband in their room at the Tivoli. The two men had come ashore only a few hours before. Robinson was the first to respond to his wife's remark.

"Who is this Mrs. Kennedy?" he asked, with the interest that mention of a woman's name always aroused in him. "Is she good looking? I'm not going unless she is."

"I'd hardly call her pretty. She's too foreign looking to suit my taste. But some people consider her a beauty. She's distinguished and exclusive—you know what I mean—and she seems to

have a lot of money. She doesn't care to know many people, I think, but she's been very friendly to me—quite sought me out, in fact."

"Is her husband here?" broke in Robinson.

Richard was looking out of the window and yawning. He wondered if he dared ask Alice to excuse him, so that he could go to bed. He was very tired and was perfectly willing to let Mrs. Kennedy wait until another time.

"Decidedly not," replied Alice to her husband's question. "She's a widow, and I think you'll find her fascinating."

"I don't want to meet her," said Richard with a grin. "Widows are dangerous."

"Humph!" said Robinson. "All women are dangerous, when it comes to that."

"But not so fatal," persisted Richard.

"Well, it makes small difference to me. I'm not interested in women, though I must say—er—I manage to get on with 'em fairly well—er—when I have to."

Robinson strutted across the room and gazed admiringly at his smirking face in the mirror, while he poured himself a glass of whisky from the bottle that always stood ready on his dressing table.

While he was thus engaged, Alice and Richard carried on a low conversation behind his back.

"Lycurgus will be her slave, and we can have all the more time together," whispered the woman.

"What if I should fall for her myself?" the boy retorted mischievously; then, as Alice looked anxious, he hastened to forestall her jealousy by adding, "I'm not apt to, though. I steer clear of widows—when I can."

Robinson returned to his chair, and his wife went on:

"She's French, but her husband was an American. He must have left her

well fixed, for she has lovely clothes and doesn't seem to think about money at all. The son of the President of Panama is crazy about her, and everybody talks about them—they're seen so much together. This is the worst place for gossip."

"But what about mass?" Richard asked. "And why must we go to-night?"

"Because it's Christmas Eve, and everybody will be there. It's at midnight, you know. Now don't say you're tired, Dickie, because I specially want you to go." Alice was very proud of her new acquaintance and thought to make an impression by displaying the intimacy before Richard.

"All right," he answered cheerfully. "It's after eleven now."

They all rose and shook, preened, or prinked themselves into shape, according to their several habits, and then descended the stairs and entered the foyer.

It was filled with people and looked much as it had the last time Richard had seen it, but now the pillars were covered with broad palm leaves and garlands, and festoons of trailing vines took the place of Christmas greens, while great bunches of fresh mistletoe and scarlet paper bells hung from lintels and chandeliers.

Alice had made some acquaintances during her stay alone, and these hastened to greet her now with the good cheer that Christmas brings. She presented them all to her husband and to Richard and took a childish delight in being the center of a little group and a part of the festive gathering. But Richard saw that, even as she laughed and chatted, she scanned the room anxiously, as if she felt that Mrs. Kennedy was neither to be overlooked nor kept waiting, and he began to wonder what manner of woman could have so impressed her.

"Where can Mrs. Kennedy be?" she

cried at last, while her eyes still searched the room. "She said she'd meet us here—and there she is!" she finished triumphantly.

Richard turned to follow the direction her eyes indicated and saw approaching them, with leisurely grace, a slender woman in black—the woman he had dreamed about.

Mrs. Kennedy approached slowly because she was using the opportunity to note the faces of the two men. She looked first at Richard and perceived a merry boy with mahogany skin and flashing white teeth.

"That can't be the husband," she thought. "He's young enough to be her son." Then her eyes wandered to the face of the other man, and she gave a barely perceptible little shrug. "I might have known it. He looks exactly like—like a veterinary!" And then, "Good evening, Mrs. Robinson. Are you all ready to go?" she asked, as she drew near.

"Yes, indeed," responded Alice. "Let me introduce my husband—and Mr. Mountgomery, his associate."

Mrs. Kennedy murmured her pleasure, and Richard saw her glance furtively at Alice's hands and, as quickly, glance away. Talking lightly, they drifted toward the door and at length succeeded in engaging a *coche* large enough for them all to squeeze into.

Mrs. Kennedy directed most of her conversation toward the Robinsons, as they drove along, and for this Richard was not sorry, since it gave him a better opportunity to study her. He found her as charming at close range as she had appeared from a distance. The details of her clothing were more exquisite than the whole effect had been; her complexion was flawless; her hair was glossy and beautifully cared for; her nails were like luminous pink shells; and wherever art had been summoned to the aid of nature, it had been done for the love of the art—as a final touch

to something already beautiful and not out of necessity for concealing an imperfection.

So absorbed was he in contemplation of her that he neither observed the merry-making in the street nor heard the holiday sounds about him, and was aroused from this state only by hearing Alice speak his name with the exasperation of one who has spoken many times before. Then he perceived, with a start of surprise, that their *coche* had come to a standstill before the cathedral.

The little group followed Mrs. Kennedy slowly through the kneeling throng that filled the aisles. She led them straight to an empty pew which seemed to have been reserved for her. This was, indeed, the case, and she explained over her shoulder, in a whisper to Alice, that it belonged to a relative of the president and had been offered to her for the evening, since its owner and his family were spending the winter abroad. When they reached the pew, she pulled open the little door with the gesture of one to whom it was familiar, and courteously motioned to Alice to enter first, then to Robinson, and last, after seating herself, she waved a gracious invitation to Richard to occupy the seat at the end, so that he was cut off from the others and was free to give his attention to her. Meanwhile, the solemn mass went on.

Richard felt strangely excited by her nearness and therefore folded his arms and sat very straight and rigid in his effort to look stolid and unconcerned. She seemed so aloof and dignified, so evidently satiated with homage, so plainly accustomed to having whatever she required, without considering whence it came—so much a woman of the world, in fact—that he stood a little in awe of her. He resolved, too, that whatever he might feel, he would not display any marked interest in her, since it was obviously impossible for



thrust upon her and uneasiness at leaving Richard alone with Mrs. Kennedy, at whose slim black figure both of her own escorts cast regretful glances as they drove away.

Mrs. Kennedy's mouth wore a faint, but highly sophisticated smile, as she in turn stepped into her carriage. But when Richard had seated himself beside her, she turned toward him, and suddenly her womanly graciousness dropped from her like a garment, and her face crinkled up into the merriest little laugh.

"Didn't I do that nicely?" she asked, exactly like a *gamine* at the close of a prank.

"By Jove," said Richard, "did you do it on purpose—really?"

"Of course. I wanted to flirt with you."

"Oh, I say!" he chuckled. "The Gairida chap was furious, wasn't he?"

"I should worry," answered the girl, still with the *gamine* air.

"You are from France, Mrs. Robinson tells me."

"I was born in Paris, but my people came to the United States when I was a very young girl. However, we speak nothing but French at home, and I was brought up in the Continental fashion. You are an American, are you not?"

"On the contrary, I am an Englishman."

"Oh, how nice! I mean—it seems so friendly of you. Of course I like Americans; my home has so long been among them," she hastened to add, "but somehow I've always felt a little bit like an exile."

"Oh, have you? I'm so glad—I mean—so have I—I mean I'm glad you've felt as I do," stammered Richard, who was so torn between his determination not to succumb to her charm and his delight and interest in probing for her personality that he hardly knew what he said.

"Did you understand what I meant

in the cathedral—about things being so beautiful?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes, I think I did. At first I thought you were going to try to convert me."

"And I would, if I could—to my creed."

"And that?"

"You see, beauty is inspiration—beauty of sight or smell or sound or thought. There is my creed—one of aesthetics, instead of ethics. Look," she went on earnestly, "take every action you can conceive of. There is not one that is not beautiful—not just abstractly, ideally, but materially, artistically beautiful—sometimes, and so long as it is that, it is, not always conventional, but right. Likewise there is not an action which is not sometimes ugly, sordid, hideous; then it is wrong. Take lying, stealing, killing. Each one of them is generally ugly, but there come times when one of these acts may be heroically beautiful; then it is right. Take loving and all that pertains to it. Usually it is beautiful; when it becomes ugly, it is wrong. It is beautiful to drink wine; it is ugly to drink too much and become drunk. Isn't that easier than laying down arbitrary rules—some actions are right and others wrong—and wouldn't we have a lovelier and more charitable world if more would adopt my creed?"

"By Jove, I've often felt something like that. Do you usually think things out that way? I didn't know women ever did."

"I don't know whether many of them do, but I love to think about things."

"But that's a masculine quality."

"Not always, although oftener, I'm afraid." Suddenly she giggled, and the *gamine* popped out once more.

"I forgot to flirt with you—and we're nearly there!" she said.

"I'm not going to flirt with you," answered Richard seriously, "at least, not

until I find out how long we're going to be here."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Everything. If I were only going to be here a week, I'd flirt, if you like, and as hard as you like. But if we're going to stop a long time, I won't."

"But why?"

"I'd rather be—friends."

"But we could be friends after we flirted, and we could never flirt after we had been friends. Are you afraid of being hurt? Do you not dare to take a chance?"

"Some one is always hurt in a flirtation, but we will both take a chance if I flirt with you."

"Is that conceit—or—what do you mean?"

"I'll tell you another time."

"You've said that twice."

"To be sure of holding your interest until the next time comes."

They were in front of the Tivoli by this time and both got out laughing and joined the rest of their party, none of whom looked happy, although all were smiling.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Lycurgus, how long are we going to be here?" asked Richard.

It was Christmas Day, and the two men stood together on the gallery, overlooking the sea, with their after-breakfast cigarettes in their hands.

"I don't know exactly—perhaps a week, perhaps a month," and Robinson distended his nostrils, drew down his mouth, and tried to look mysterious, as if possessed of secret knowledge which he could not impart to a subordinate.

"Look here, Robinson, I've stood for a lot of tomfoolery, but I organized this company and I let you in on it—and I've as big a share in it as you have. Now I think it's time we had some sort of an understanding. I want to know why we're here and how long

we're going to stay. If you'd listened to me, we'd be on the property now, and there'd be a chance of getting money some time. You've absolutely wasted the past two months, and the crowd'll be growing sore." Such was the effect of Richard's first evening with Mrs. Kennedy.

"Why are you so anxious for money all of a sudden? There's not much to do here, anyway."

"There's plenty to do here, but what I want to do is my own affair. There's a lot coming to me, and I want some of it right now."

"Want to make a hit with Mrs. Kennedy? I thought you liked to steer clear of widows. Say, will you take Alice out this afternoon? I've something I'd like to do."

"I'm going to be busy myself, and if you think you've succeeded in making me forget what I started out to say, you're jolly well wrong. I want to know how long we stay in Panama, and I want some money."

"Now look here, Dick," answered Robinson in a whining voice, "I can't help you out. There've been a lot of expenses and Alice needs a lot and—well, I haven't got it—that's all."

"I'm not asking for a loan. I'm asking for money you've been owing me for some time past—so you'd better cut out that talk and fork over."

"I tell you I haven't got it."

"Haven't got it! What have you done with it all?"

"Well—er—"

"Look here, Robinson, we've got to have a settlement. What have you done with the money?"

"Well—to tell the truth—er—things have got tangled up a little and—er—Talbot's coming down."

"Talbot coming? Hell's fire! You must have balled things up!"

"Well—er—you see—I've got to have something to make a showing, and I don't want Alice to know. I tell



you what I'll do—I'll let you have twenty-five to tide you over a couple of days and then I'll try to get some."

"You'll jolly well have to get some!"

"You won't say anything to Alice, will you?"

"I certainly won't, but it's not for your sake that I'll keep still, and when Talbot comes, I fancy some things'll be investigated. When's he coming?"

"He sails next week."

"You'll have two weeks, then, and you'd better try to straighten things out in the meantime."

Richard stuffed the bills handed to him into his pocket and walked inside. There he went straight to one of the telephone booths and called up Mrs. Kennedy's room.

"Will you drive with me this afternoon, when you finish your siesta?" he asked, after greeting her.

"With pleasure," came the clear response. "About four?"

"If that's convenient for you."

"It will be, and I shall enjoy going—and, Mr. Mountgomery, while I have the opportunity—it won't be quite a real party since we're all stopping here anyway, but I think it would be so nice if you and the Robinsons would sit at my table to-night. We must have a little festivity for Christmas."

"Oh, it would be ripping! Thanks, ever so much. I'll be delighted, and I'm sure they will."

"Good. At four, then," and he heard the click of her receiver, as she hung it up.

Richard ran upstairs three steps at a time and, finding it impossible to sleep, spent the hours until four o'clock lying on his bed and reading.

Meanwhile Thérèse Kennedy hummed a gay little air and smiled now and then to herself as she moved leisurely about her room, laying out the dainty garments which she would wear—filmy, lacy things run through with pale pink ribbons, white silk stockings

clocked with black, and a pair of small white shoes with jet buckles on their toes, then a soft white frock and a floppy black hat with long velvet strings to tie under her chin. At half after three, she was ready and, a few minutes later, she tapped at Mrs. Robinson's door.

"Come in," called Alice's languid voice, and the door was thrown open by Robinson, who beamed fatuously when he saw who his visitor was.

"Mrs. Kennedy—Merry Christmas! Come in—come in."

"Good afternoon," said Alice, still languidly. She did not rise from her seat and continued to puff at her cigarette with an air of indifference to her companions.

Mrs. Kennedy looked at her in surprise and hesitation for a moment; then she said pleasantly:

"Merry Christmas to you both. I just dropped in to ask if you would sit at my table to-night. I thought we might help each other celebrate."

"Thank you, I guess we can," drawled Alice without enthusiasm.

"We'll be most awfully glad to," put in Robinson hastily. "Alice isn't feeling very well this afternoon, but I think she'll be better presently and—er—we'll be glad to—er—thank you. Won't you sit down?"

"No, thank you—I'm going out. Then it's all arranged, and I'll expect you at eight. Good-by. I hope you'll feel better, Mrs. Robinson. It's a shame to be ill on Christmas Day."

"I'll walk to the stairs with you," said Robinson eagerly, following her through the door. "I was hoping you might take a little drive with me this afternoon," he said, when they were well outside.

"Thank you, but I am engaged," she answered simply.

"Er—Mrs. Kennedy," he began then with some embarrassment.

"Yes?"

"Er—did you ask Mr. Mountgomery, too—to sit at your table?"

"But certainly. He is of your party, isn't he? What do you mean?"

"Well—er—he's my business associate, of course, but we—er—don't have anything to do with him socially—more than we can help. Er—you see, he—er—we'd rather you didn't ask him to dinner when you ask us. Er—you see——"

Feeling Mrs. Kennedy's eyes fixed upon him, the man floundered desperately and finally stopped.

"Mr. Robinson," said the woman then, "your wife spoke often and cordially of Mr. Mountgomery before you both arrived, and she presented him to me. I made his acquaintance in the first place simply because he was your associate and, I supposed, your friend. If you have come in kindness and with reason to warn me against Mr. Mountgomery, it is a sorry afterthought to your presentation of him. Still, if you honestly believe him to be socially undesirable, or if you have a genuine reason for speaking as you have, I will assume that your words of caution were kindly meant and will not be hasty in forming my own judgment of the man, but if any other motive has prompted your extraordinary request, I must——"

"Well—er—" interrupted the man, "he's not exactly undesirable, but we—er——"

"Since you have no adequate reason, please say nothing further about this to me," said Mrs. Kennedy crisply. "Mr. Mountgomery will be my guest this evening. If you and your wife care to join us——"

"Oh, of course I didn't mean that we wouldn't——"

"Very well, then, I shall look for you at eight—good-by."

"Only it seems pretty evident that you prefer his company to mine," grumbled the man.

Thérèse Kennedy looked amazed.

"My dear man," she said, "I met you both yesterday, and the preference of a day is hardly a matter of consequence. Good-by," and she hastened away.

Richard watched her descend the stairs. He was grinning boyishly, and his teeth looked dazzlingly white, for his face was burned to a golden brown, several shades darker than his sunny hair. He looked preposterously young and radiantly happy, Mrs. Kennedy thought, as she smiled down upon him.

"I say, how simply ripping you look! I've not seen you in white before," he said, as they started out.

"I'm glad you like it," was her smiling response.

"Where would you like to go?" he asked. "Have you any preference?"

"The Sabannas Road is best at this hour of the day," she answered, and he gave the direction to the *cochero*.

"What I can't understand," he began, as they drove off, "is how I came to miss you when I was here before. I was in Panama a whole week and I never saw you until my last night."

"When was that? I must have been in the hotel, for I've been living here for the past four months."

"Well, I was awfully busy and I lived on the boat most of the time, but I hate to think of that week I might have known you and didn't."

"How nice of you!" She laughed as if she really were pleased. "Did you have a splendid trip?"

"Well," said Richard dryly, "it wasn't altogether a pleasure trip. We went on business."

"Yes, Mrs. Robinson told me that her husband had some property down there—mines, I believe."

"Er—yes," Richard said, with a gulp, "he is interested in some mines down there."

"And you—are you interested in Colombian property, also? Mr. Robinson spoke of you as a business associate."

"I have some shares in the mines."

"How fascinating! You know, if a man must do something, I think it is so infinitely better to go into such enterprises—to have mines or plantations or colony schemes or anything that will permit one to travel, to go to out-of-the-way places, to get about the world and to see all kinds of people and things. I don't see how men exist who sit in offices all day—the same place, the same thing, day after day."

"Nor I. Fancy! Never to throw a leg over a saddle, never to sail a boat, to get up at the same time every day, to go downtown on the same train, to sit and do the same thing, think the same thoughts, day after day! Jove, wouldn't it be terrible?"

"Wouldn't it?" Thérèse turned to him earnestly. "You know, I lived in a suburb of a big American city once—when I was a girl—and I've never forgotten it. If one went in on a train in the morning, one always saw long lines of pompous, pudgy men—the type that wears bowlers and overcoats, without gloves—sitting behind their newspapers, all looking exactly alike, and long lines of respectable, gray-clad women, with patient, harassed faces and bulging shopping bags. And if one came out on a train in the evening, one saw the same lines, only the men would be wilted and smudgy, and the women would be straggly and would sit slumped down in their seats, with their feet sprawled apart and their hands clasped over their tummies in attitudes of dejected resignation."

"Ye gods, I've seen 'em!" said Richard, chuckling. "And the men go home and put on linen dusters and mow the lawns in front of their bungalows, or else they push perambulators up and down the walk."

"Yes," giggled Thérèse, "that's just what they do. And the women sit on the steps and darn stockings. Isn't it awful?"

"Awful!" agreed Richard with emphasis.

"Have you been about to a lot of interesting places?" asked Thérèse.

"Oh, I've been about more or less. I've had to, ever since I started my business career."

"What is your business, may I ask? Are you an engineer?"

"Sometimes I'm an engineer. I've done all sorts of things."

"Oh, what? Will you tell me?"

Richard looked into her glowing face. When he had first seen her, she had been cold, sophisticated, disdainful, even. Then she had been a *gamine*—a sparkling, prankish imp. Now she was just a girl—eager, sympathetic, and delectable. He wondered what further possibilities were there.

"Why are you staring at me? Is anything crooked?" asked Mrs. Kennedy.

"I was just thinking that you are different every time I see you."

"I should hope so," answered Mrs. Kennedy promptly. "You've only seen me twice."

"Three times."

"Well, then, three times. But a woman must surely be very stupid if she reaches the end of her resources in a glimpse and two interviews."

"Oh, do you do it on purpose?"

"No, I can't help it. I always feel different according to the clothes I have on, but if I weren't naturally that way, I should do my best to appear so. Monotony must be unendurable to men."

"That's why we are called fickle, because most girls are always the same, and we have to change girls every time our mood changes. It's really quite a bore."

"Would you be pleased to find one woman who could change herself to fit your moods?"

"Tickled to death! It would save all the bother of moving about and hunting up fresh ones. I believe in

economy of motion. Why? Do you think you could do it?" he asked audaciously.

"Oh, have you decided to flirt with me?"

"No, I'm going to be here several weeks, at least."

"Then I shan't try. Now let's go back, and you tell me some of the interesting things you've done."

"Oh, I've studied medicine—and I've done civil engineering—and I've been a broker—and I've gone to South America—and I've lived in bohemia in New York—and I've been an electrician—and I've sold various things—and I——"

"But, Mr. Mountgomery," protested Thérèse, "you couldn't possibly have done all of those things—you're not old enough."

"I began early and I did 'em quickly. Besides, I'm older than you think."

"But you can't have had time for all that."

"I have—and for heaps of other things. How old do you think I am?"

"Twenty-five—at the very most."

"Thirty-two."

"Impossible! Why, you're a kid!"

"It's true, alas!"

"I never would have dreamed you were thirty-two. I thought you were younger than I."

"Lord, no!"

"I'm twenty-five. I won't mind telling my age until I'm thirty."

"You won't need to mind then, for you'll be in your prime at forty and attractive till you're fifty."

"Why do you think that?"

"I've known a good many women."

"You promised to tell me why you wouldn't flirt with me," Thérèse said softly.

"I'll tell you now," said Richard with boyish earnestness. "It's because—well, you see, I saw you when I was in Panama before. You were coming down the stairs, all in black, with Ga-

rida behind you, and I stared at you so hard, I dropped my cigarette and burned a hole in my coat."

"Oh, what did you think?"

"I thought you were beautiful—and that you were accustomed to having everything you wanted—and I wished I were coming back from Colombia, instead of starting down."

"You're coming back now."

"Yes, but not the way I expected to come back. Then—well, then I went down the coast and it was beastly dull, and I kept thinking about you and what a good time we could have if I knew you—and several times I dreamed about you. I really was awfully surprised at that myself. Once I cut out a verse about you. I'll give it to you some time."

"About me?"

"Well, it was like you. I say—does this sound silly?"

"Nothing sounds silly to a woman so long as it's about herself. And then?"

"When I came back, I didn't dream of meeting you, and when I did, I didn't want to spoil—I knew you wouldn't believe me at first, but now——"

"But now I'm immensely pleased, for I love to be liked. It's one of the most comfortable sensations I know of."

"Then you must be perfectly comfortable at present," said Richard and found her hand. He hesitated a moment, and Mrs. Kennedy half turned away her head. Then he put one arm about her, turned her lips to his, and kissed her. "Please may I kiss you?" he asked, a moment later.

"Do you always ask afterward?"

"Nearly always. I'm sure of getting what I want that way."

She turned her head away again, and Richard began to wonder if she were offended.

"I like to kiss you," he said reflectively.

"Do you?" Then she gave a little bounce on the seat, like a little girl, and, "I'm so glad I'm not forty yet," she said.

"Mrs. Kennedy, you are such a dear!"

"Mrs. Kennedy' sounds silly now. Would you like to call me Thérèse?"

"Oh, may I? And will you call me Richard—or Dick, if you like?"

"The Robinsons call you Dick—I shall say Richard. I prefer to be different."

All of the rest of the way, they laughed and chattered and were happy, like two children on a picnic.

Just before they reached the hotel, Richard said:

"You've let me kiss you, but you never once have kissed me. Perhaps you thought I wouldn't notice it, but I did."

"I didn't exactly think that, but I thought it would be so nice to have something left over for another time—Richard."

"I'm glad to be assured that there'll be another time—Thérèse. To-night?"

"No, certainly not to-night."

"Oh, I say, why not?"

"Because the Robinsons will be there," and, laughing, she ran away from him into the house and up the stairs.

## CHAPTER VIII.

A few minutes before eight, Thérèse came downstairs. She had put on a white dinner gown in honor of Christmas, a soft, clinging gown of creamy satin, and had entwined a rope of pearls in the coils of her glossy black hair, while pear-shaped, pendant pearls swung from her ears. Her face was cream white, and her lips were the scarlet of holly berries. She looked finished and very festive and gay, as if she had been decorated for the holiday, but at the same time simple and natural, for the decorations were suit-

able to her and to the occasion, while her simplicity was that of a string of perfectly matched pearls.

Thérèse had superintended the laying of her own table and had ordered the wines and other extras beforehand, so that it was brave with shining glass, flowers, and Christmas favors. The room was full of people, all in gala dress, and there were a clinking of glass, a tinkling of laughter, and a murmur of merry voices.

Robinson was overanxious to impress, and Alice a little sulky, but Richard and Thérèse were overflowing with good spirits, and the woman was a trained and gracious hostess, so that the dinner proceeded smoothly, while they discoursed of indifferent things.

"Did you see the children in Cathedral Plaza this afternoon?" asked Mr. Robinson of Thérèse, when they had reached the salad and were eating slowly and talking much. "They were all in fancy dress dancing."

"No. Were they cunning?"

"Very. I hoped you'd see them. You said you were going out."

"So I did. Mr. Mountgomery and I went for a drive, but we took the Sabannas Road."

"Oh," said Robinson stiffly, "I hope you had a pleasant time."

"I did, thank you. We had a most interesting discussion, hadn't we, Mr. Mountgomery?"

"We certainly had," answered Richard with a grin.

"What was it about?" asked Alice, and her voice was sharp.

"About the way people live," answered Thérèse brightly. "You know the kind of people who live in one house, in one town, all their lives, doing one thing, and who have mission furniture and green cartridge paper and mow lawns and push perambulators? Well, we both agreed that it would be better to jump off of Brooklyn Bridge than to live that way."

"But such people are the backbone of our nation, Mrs. Kennedy," said Robinson, decidedly perturbed.

"I don't doubt it," answered Thérèse lightly, "but there are many parts of the body more beautiful than the spinal column and also necessary."

"Do you only respect people with money?" asked Alice, with the manner of one seeking opportunity for dispute.

"On the contrary, those for whom I have the least respect are the people with money who don't spend it well—those who could live beautifully, but who hardly live decently. When I see people with quantities of money spending it artistically—traveling, studying, helping on all of the arts, putting beauty into the world by the simple method of taking their own pleasure beautifully—I don't envy them. I rejoice that they exist. But when I see others leading dull, stodgy, stolid lives, hoarding up their gold so that no one else can enjoy it and getting no enjoyment themselves, I feel like an anarchist."

"But what would you have one do?" asked Alice suspiciously.

"Well, there is a great, broad, beautiful world, full of strange and lovely and interesting things, spread out for one's use, and I would have one use it all to the fullest extent, instead of stagnating in one small corner of it."

"What is your idea of a proper life, Mrs. Kennedy?" asked Robinson curiously, and Richard leaned forward to miss no word of her reply.

"Seriously, would you like to know what I should do if I could follow my own inclination absolutely?"

"Yes—tell us."

"Well, you must understand that I do not recommend this for all—each one must make his own plan to suit his own temperament. But for me, I would buy a yacht, a big steam yacht. That would be my home, which I could take with me wherever I went, so I

would furnish the interior like a home, with flowers and books and pictures and every possible comfort and luxury. And I would have plenty of room for guests, although I would never want many at a time. And then I would go drifting around the world, stopping at all the out-of-the-way places, staying as long as I liked and going on when I liked. I would visit every island on the globe if I could—except the very cold ones—for nothing seems to me to have such mystery and romance, such unlimited possibilities, as an island."

"Wouldn't you long for cities sometimes?" asked Alice.

"Certainly; but whenever I needed operas and theaters and things that only a city can give, I would go to one of the gay capitals—Paris, Budapest, Vienna—and there I would stay for a short time and get my fill of the life. Then I would travel again. And after a while, I would buy an island—in the Mediterranean, I think, because there I should be surrounded by the most interesting countries in the world, only a few days' journey from each—and there I should have my castle built, and I should take to it my loot from the far corners of the earth, and I should make it a miniature world exactly to suit myself—my treasure island, filled with beautiful things, which I should have gathered myself. I should stay there to rest whenever the fancy took me, and in the end I should go there to live, to grow old happily and peacefully in the sunshine."

"And what would you do for companionship all this time?" said Richard, regarding her with fascinated eyes, for she was flushed with enthusiasm and speaking seriously.

"Oh, I should take parties of congenial friends for short cruises off and on, but generally I should have a lover who pleased my fancy and made me happy for the time; and when I tired of him, I should put him ashore wher-



ever we happened to be—and then I should find another, for a woman is never really happy long without being loved by some one."

"But suppose you found one who could content you forever?" persisted Richard.

"Oh, that would be ideal, but so improbable!" sighed Thérèse. "It would be like trying to wear one's pet gown all the rest of one's life."

"Do you honestly mean that you would live that way?" asked Robinson in a horrified tone.

"But certainly. Can you think of anything more delightful? I should have adventures in every land and have a series of honeymoons. I should be surrounded by beauty and companioned by congenial minds always. What more could a human being desire?"

"For myself, I should prefer a more simple, wholesome, natural life," said Alice sternly.

"But," protested Thérèse, "that would be simple. It would be getting right away from all ties and complications. And it would be natural, for it would be following my inclination. And it would be wholesome, for it would be out of doors. And it would be giving pleasure to myself and harm to no one."

"I can't argue with you, Mrs. Kennedy," said Alice severely, "but I certainly don't agree with you."

Richard's mouth twitched, and he suppressed a laugh with difficulty, for Thérèse looked across at him with just the suspicion of a wink.

"We're growing too serious for a fiesta," she said. "Let's drink once more to—to your success in Colombia, Mr. Robinson. And now shall we go into the other room?"

They rose and strolled into the foyer and from there into the ballroom and thence to the balcony, where many people paced up and down or sat on wicker benches listening to the band. Mrs.

Kennedy led the way with Robinson, while Richard followed with Alice, and the two couples sauntered slowly around the gallery, which encircled the entire building.

"Would you really be satisfied, Mrs. Kennedy, if you owned an island and a yacht?" began Robinson in a low voice.

"I think I should," replied Thérèse. "Those are the two things I want most now."

"Well, I own both—and I'm not a contented man."

"Have you really an island, too?"

"Yes—off the coast of Colombia. Of course it isn't in the Mediterranean."

"But an island is an island, wherever it is. You're a very lucky man."

"No. I'm not lucky, for I'm not properly understood. Mrs. Kennedy, I'm greatly in sympathy with your views—more than you imagine I am."

"Are you?" inquired Thérèse, looking down into his upturned monkey face, for she was several inches taller than he. "But you seemed not to be, at dinner."

"Oh, that was because— You see, my wife doesn't think just as I do, and I've found it doesn't pay to express myself before her. It's not pleasant, Mrs. Kennedy, to be always misunderstood. But you— Now, if you'd let me talk to you alone for a while, I believe I could convince you that we think alike in many ways. Couldn't we arrange it?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Robinson?"

"I'd like to talk to you. You know I have the same ideas you have about—er—friendship between men and women. In fact, I live a good deal the way you would like to—only not openly, of course—and—"

"Mr. Robinson, I'm afraid you must have misunderstood this time. It's the way of doing a thing that makes it possible or impossible—and the person who does it."

"Oh, I didn't misunderstand."

Thérèse glanced down at the little man, with his conceited smirk and his ridiculous strut, and smiled quietly to herself.

"It's so pleasant to find a congenial soul, isn't it?" she said sweetly.

"Yes, and that's why I'm so glad to have met you. I should like to have you for a friend, Mrs. Kennedy—for more than a friend. I'm not interested in women usually. Now there are a lot of women here in the hotel I suppose I could talk to. There's one little school-teacher who's tried her best to flirt with me, but what have I in common with a little school-teacher?"

"What indeed? It must be a great relief to find yourself properly appreciated," said Mrs. Kennedy gravely.

The little man beamed. He threw back his shoulders and swaggered until he rolled in his walk, like a sailor.

"It is—er—it is," he agreed. "And I shan't be content with mere friendship, either."

"I can see that you would be a dangerous man," said Thérèse.

"I am—er—I'm a monopolist by nature, and if a woman—er—succeeds in interesting me, I like to occupy all of her thoughts. I insist upon doing so, Mrs. Kennedy."

"You wicked man, you have learned one of our secrets—that we like to be mastered—haven't you, Mr. Robinson?"

"It's true, isn't it, that women like a masterful man? Do you know, I should like to kiss you?"

"Surely you flatter me."

"No—really—er—I've a notion to do it, too."

"Not here—please."

"Well—er—not with my wife behind us, but— When will you drive with me?"

"You said you were dangerous, you know, and I must have time to consider the risk," answered Thérèse, almost

stifling with suppressed laughter. "I think Miss Palmer wishes to speak with you. She seems to be looking this way."

A very dark woman, with untidy hair and high cheekbones, had stopped Mrs. Robinson in her walk and was looking after Mr. Robinson, who now felt forced to go back to greet her. This left Richard and Thérèse free for the moment, and they quickly gravitated together. Richard was laughing as usual. He took Thérèse's arm and drew her a little apart from the others.

"The funniest thing just happened," he began. "Miss Palmer came up behind Alice and me, in the shadow round the corner, and gave my arm a little squeeze. Then when I turned round, she said, 'Oh, pardon me, I thought it was some one else.' You know she and Robinson have been carrying on a great flirtation. He calls her Sweet Alice and she calls him Ben Bolt."

"That must be the little school-teacher with whom he has nothing in common," giggled Thérèse.

"She is a school-teacher, but what do you mean?"

Thérèse repeated the greater part of her conversation with Robinson, and they laughed over it together.

"He's always like that," said the boy. "He thinks women are crazy over him, and he certainly is over them. He used to have a dozen letters from them at the office every morning. But, I say, if he annoys you in any way, I wish you'd let me know and I'll jolly well break his head."

"The little creature is too ridiculous to be annoying. One can only laugh at him. Why is Mrs. Robinson so cool to me, I wonder? She hung onto me continually and made a regular fuss over me before you came—and she was so eager to present you both to me. But now she acts as if resenting the fact that I am here at all. Why do you suppose that is?"

"I can't imagine," said Richard with a grin.

"Does she think I want to flirt with her silly little husband?"

"Perhaps."

They looked at each other and laughed.

"I've always wanted to find some one who would laugh with me at this funny, funny world," said Thérèse whimsically.

"I will," answered Richard, and they laughed again. "Will you drive with me again to-morrow?"

"Do you really want me to?"

"You bet I do!"

"Then I will. And now I have some letters to write and must go up."

They went slowly upstairs together, chattering all of the way. At her door, Richard said good night, kissed her hand, and turned to leave her; then stood hesitating, very boyishly, half-way between her door and his own. He looked absurdly young and just a wee bit wistful, while his eyes smiled back at her in delicious comradeship. Thérèse felt suddenly old—much older than he; felt, too, a sort of maternal tenderness that could deny him nothing. Richard had a way of looking like a helpless, adorable child when he wanted anything. He knew it himself and every one knew that he knew it, but, in spite of this, it was perfectly natural and always effective.

"Richard," whispered Thérèse, "come back a minute."

"Well," whispered the boy and glanced up and down the hall, smiling when he saw that it was quite empty and that all of the doors were closed.

"I think I have a Christmas present for you."

"Have you really?" Richard's voice was full of boyish delight.

"Put down your head."

Richard obediently lowered his blond head and smiled at her upward through his long lashes.

"Good night," said Thérèse, and brushed his cheek with a fleeting kiss. Then she flashed into her room and was gone before Richard had caught his breath.

## CHAPTER IX.

From the first, theirs was a union of laughter. They met, the morning after Christmas, with a laugh for the chance that had brought them thus early together, and throughout that day and the golden ones that followed it, they chattered and bubbled and chuckled, overflowing with merriment.

That day was the beginning of a succession of wonderful ones, in which they explored the country and each other. The boy had nothing to do but await the arrival of Talbot and he gave his time to Thérèse. Very soon they were spending all their waking hours together. They even gave up the regular siesta time to conversation, sitting close together on a bench in the shadiest corner of the gallery—so stimulated and exhilarated by companionship that they felt no need of sleep. Then they would discuss books, art, music, and politics. Thérèse was conventbred and had associated in her own home with rarely cultivated people, and Richard discovered that, while her heart was that of a girl, her mind and experience were those of a woman of the world.

"Richard," she began one day, as they were driving through the country toward "Old Panama," "I do so like the people who are what I like, and I hate the people who only do what I like. There are men who will very graciously dress for dinner when you're dining with them, because they know you like it, but you feel all the time that they're uncomfortable and never do it when they're alone. Now it doesn't give me pleasure that they should make themselves miserable for me, but it gives me pleasure to know

men who would feel exceedingly uncomfortable to dine any other way, whether alone or with me. If a thing is worth doing and makes life more attractive, it's worth doing all of the time and for your own satisfaction. It's just like the people who use cheap china every day and have an expensive set which they bring out for company."

"That's exactly what I think." Richard sat up straight in his excitement. "You know, so many people have two sets of manners—one for home and one for outside—and that's one of the reasons I've always turned cold when I thought of marrying. I've been afraid that the woman would treat me with horrible, revolting familiarity when we were shut up by ourselves. Marriage isn't supposed to be temporary—like a love affair—and I always did think that the prime requisites for a dignified, satisfactory marriage were, first, that both parties should belong to the same class of society, so that they'd naturally think along the same lines, and, second, that they should treat each other with the same courtesy and consideration when they're alone that they show each other in public."

"And never form habits of familiarity, so that intimacy may always seem a delightful privilege instead of a matter of course," finished Thérèse.

"Exactly," said Richard.

"How can those others," went on the woman, "expect to keep love, which lies only in mystery? That's why faithfulness is impossible and a mad infatuation burns out most quickly. The greater the passion, the greater the intimacy, which destroys mystery. When that is gone, love is gone. Affection persists, but there is no great joy in a simple affection without any thrills."

"My dear, you are precocious," said Richard, "to have learned so much at your age."

And then they both laughed and beamed at each other, getting a bigger

thrill out of this mental contact than most people ever get out of the physical.

At the end of three weeks, another cable arrived from Talbot saying that he would be delayed for some time, and that Richard and Robinson must wait in Panama until he came. Richard rejoiced at this news, took no thought for the fate of his enterprise, and continued to pass the days happily with Thérèse.

## CHAPTER X.

It was noon and unbearably hot. Alice Robinson, entering her room after a morning of lonely prowling about the shops, looked white and fagged. She removed her hat and long silk gloves, poured out a stiff drink of whisky, took it at a gulp, found and lighted a cigarette, and sank into a chair.

She was miserable as only an emotionally precocious and intellectually deficient woman can be. With all of her nervous, clinging, stubborn, unintelligent emotionalism, she loved Richard. He had flattered her with a moment of investigation, and she had coiled the tentacles of her amorous imagination about him and had fancied that she held him fast. Now he had been stolen from her—so Alice put it to herself—just when she had thought to prove herself resourceful by throwing Mrs. Kennedy into the path of her husband; and, like the simple animal she was, Alice raged, sulked, and suffered, fostered feelings of revenge without any plan for accomplishment, and hated the other woman without conceiving of a campaign of competition.

"If only I could get Dickie away from here," she kept repeating to herself, as helplessly as a squirrel grown tired of its cage, "or if only something would happen to that cat of a woman, everything would be all right again."

She rose, stripped off her crumpled clothing, rubbed herself dry with a towel, thrust her arms into the sleeves of a cotton kimono, and threw herself down upon her bed. There she lay for a long time, panting with the heat, her temples throbbing, her face burning, and her eyes wide open. At last, however, they closed, and she was just drifting into longed-for forgetfulness when the chamber door opened and her husband entered.

"Well," he greeted his prostrate spouse, "looks as though the game's almost up."

"What do you mean, Lycurgus? Do ring for some lemon squash," sighed Alice wearily.

"I mean that I can't hold Talbot off much longer—and if I can't cover our tracks better before he gets here, we'll have to cut and run."

"But why can't you?" demanded Alice, sitting up and flapping the corners of her kimono to fan herself. "You said, if you could get that race-track concession—"

"But how am I going to get it, you little fool? We've got to hang on to Dick to hold the Colombian proposition, and Garida's not going to give us anything so long as he thinks Dick's one of us. He's working to get rid of him as quickly as possible, so as to have a clear field with Mrs. Kennedy."

"And you can't get it without Señor Garida?"

"Good Lord, no! Everything to be got in Panama is in his hands—or some member of his family."

"Do you think he wants to marry Mrs. Kennedy?"

"I don't know. How can I tell what a wop wants, but—"

"If we should have to skip, what about Dickie?"

"Oh, damn your precious Dickie! You'll have to let him go and be satisfied with what we've got. It isn't such a bad haul at that."

"You'd let Dickie go—just leave him here—stranded?"

"What else could we do?"

"You're a—a beast, and I won't do it!"

For Richard's actual prospects and welfare, Alice cared not at all; she would have sacrificed them at any time for an hour of his company. But she did wish that he should be forced to remain with her and wished, too, that, in some miraculous manner, she might isolate him from other women, so that whatever he required of her sex, he would have to ask of her. Such a situation would content her utterly, while to leave him behind in Panama, and with Mrs. Kennedy, would desolate her. That was all that her husband's talk meant to Alice, and the sole problem about which her little brain revolved.

"What if," she began slowly, "we could make Señor Garida believe that we're playing against Dickie, which, of course, we are—that to help us would be to ruin him, to force him to go back to New York?"

"But how could I do that without Dick finding out? He sees a lot more of Garida than I do—and that's a queer thing, too. I know Garida hates him and wants to cut him out, and yet he's a lot more friendly with him and actually seems to like him a lot better than he does me."

Alice looked at her husband and shrugged.

"Men like that," she replied, from the depths of her own humiliation, "always stick together—even when they fight among themselves."

"There's something in your idea," Robinson reflected, ignoring the feminine comment on class distinctions, "but I don't see how I can work it. Dick could still queer us with the Colombia crowd—if he found out. A cable from him would start Talbot to-morrow. The only reason he hasn't sent it is

because he's enjoying himself so much here. But we can usually count on something like that with Dick."

Alice winced.

"Listen," she said, the strength of her desire keeping her on the track of her scheme, "if you can swing this business by yourself and get enough out of these people to satisfy Talbot, the Colombia deal will go on and Dickie will have to go back down the coast, won't he?"

"Yes, but I can't explain all that to Garida, and he'll think that Dick knows and that we're all trying to play him."

"But if you should guarantee to get Dickie out of the way?"

"There's something in that. And you, I suppose," he went on with a sneer, "are planning to go down to the property with 'Dickie?'"

"And leave you," retorted Mrs. Robinson promptly, "to do what you like in Panama."

Her husband grunted.

At that moment, there came the sound of a merry chuckle from the gallery outside, and Richard and Thérèse strolled by, swinging the girl's closed parasol between them like two youngsters swinging a basket. Alice clenched her fists and Robinson set his teeth, for, in his vulgar, middle-class fashion, he, too, had dreamed of the conquest of Thérèse.

He rose, crossed to his telephone, called for the office of the Panamanian secretary of state, and asked if he might speak with Señor Garida. In a moment he hung up the receiver and turned to Alice.

"I've an appointment with him," he said, "this afternoon at four."

## CHAPTER XI.

"Let's go down to the Bovedas, honey, and watch the sunset," Richard suggested. "It's almost time, and on the way I want to stop at Misteli's and pick out a present for Juanita."

"Juanita?" questioned Thérèse.

"Yes—a little native girl down the coast, to whom I promised to send a present. 'Affection persists,' you said, I believe, 'when mystery wears away.'"

Thérèse laughed.

"All right," she said, "I'll get my hat."

As they droye down the Avenida Central, they passed Señor Garida, who bowed somewhat stiffly and glared at them.

"Jealous brute, isn't he, Thérèse?" remarked Richard quizzically.

Thérèse glanced at him sidewise through her lashes, and smiled.

"Funny," went on the boy, "why a chap usually makes an ass of himself because he happens to like a girl."

"Have you never been jealous?"

"I've been peeved because a girl paid too much attention to another man while she was out with me, but that was pride, not jealousy."

"Could you be jealous?"

"Worse than a Turk, if I wanted to. I could be so bad that I'd make a perfect slave of a girl—I'd have to hide my pistols for fear of shooting the first man who spoke to her—but I wouldn't want to. It would be such a beastly bother. Could you be jealous, Thérèse?"

"Certainly, but I hope I'd be clever enough to play the game and not show it. It's strange that so few people realize that, if they can't hold some one's love, it's their own fault, not that of the recreant lover."

"How about a man's past?"

"Never! I should hate a man without a past. It's so unflattering to please an uneducated taste. I don't see how a man could take pleasure in a woman whom no one else admired."

"They can't. I remember I used to suffer agonies, when I was a kid, if I had to take a girl to a party, for fear the other fellows wouldn't ask her to



dance, or for fear she'd make some mistake and they'd laugh at her."

"It's true," said Thérèse, with sudden gravity. "Absolutely nothing can hurt so much as ridicule, and it's worse to be with some one who makes awkward blunders than it is to make them one's self."

They stopped at the jeweler's, and Thérèse helped to choose a bracelet that would be sure to delight Juanita.

"Do you always remember girls and like them," she asked, "after you've left them?"

"Surely I like them—as much as I ever did. Why not? Unless they've done something disagreeable. Then I forget 'em."

They drove to the sea wall and there dismissed their *cochero*.

Las Bovedas was a promenade built on top of the walls surrounding the old Chiriqui Prison, which occupied the whole of a small peninsula. On one side there was a sheer drop to the sea; on the other, the buildings and patio of the prison; while beneath the walls were the ancient dungeons and chambers of torture. This broad promenade, or terrace, with a low stone rail on either side, was a playground for the people. The children came, with their nurses, during the early afternoon; ladies walked there, with their escorts, throughout the sunset time; in the early evening the Panamanian youths brought their roller skates, while the young girls watched them from the stone seats along either side, themselves guarded by black-mantilla-ed dueñas; and, later still, lovers walked there, arm in arm, in the moonlight.

Richard and Thérèse loved the sunset hour. Near the point of the peninsula stood a statue on a high pedestal, whose steps formed broad stone seats. There they liked to sit, for, looking to the left, they could watch the sea change from deep blue to rose and mauve and silver and finally pale to a shining gray;

they could see the golden radiance falling on emerald islands and gradually fading away, and their eyes could follow the white sails gleaming until they disappeared in the purple mist. Then, by simply turning their heads, they could see a glory of rose and crimson and gold pour over the red-tiled roofs of the city and could watch it glow and shift and change until it slipped behind the hills and drew the edges of darkness down and tucked them in after it. And all the while they could hear the chattering and the wild minor singing of the prisoners in the court below.

During this hour, Richard would talk of boats and of sailing out over the sea to far-away lands of romance, while the golden light shone on his yellow hair and the light of the sea filled his eyes. Then he would be neither laughing nor frowning, but strangely serious; his voice would take on a different tone, his cheeks would flush with enthusiasm, and he would pour out volleys of words, punctuated with short, embarrassed hesitations, while his face would be bright with a sort of boyish reverence—for now he talked of something real and something he really loved.

But to-night he spoke of other things.

"Garida's awfully in love with you, isn't he?" he began reflectively.

"In his way, I suppose he is."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that he's interested in making love to me, but not in talking to me. I don't call it real affection when a man can think of nothing but of possessing a woman—when he makes every effort under the sun to win her, but is bored to death if he has to talk to her for an hour without caressing her—when he says that he'd rather never see her again than be with her, even though she's gracious to him, and not have her belong to him altogether. Would you call that love, Richard?"

"No, that's infatuation. If a man really loved a woman, he'd give her to

his best friend cheerfully if he thought she'd be happier so. I wouldn't do it—but then I could never love the way other chaps seem to."

"A good many women have been kind to you, haven't they, Richard?"

"No more than to any other fellow who has nerve enough to ask 'em. Of course, Thérèse, I've known a lot of girls and I've loved quite a few, but I grow so tired of them after a while. I try not to. I don't want to feel that way, but I can't help it—I just do. Dear," he added and rested his head against her knee in the darkness, for she sat on the step above him and trailed her fingers through his hair, "you know, the very most delicious thing about you—the thing I adore you for—is that you've let me kiss you and play with you and you've never once said, 'Do you love me?' Of course you didn't need to ask, but most women do. I know I once took a girl to a concert—The most heavenly music, Thérèse! It carried me out of myself, and when it ended, I stood a moment fairly gasping, with my whole soul throbbing and the music still in my ears. And then that creature leaned over to me and whispered, 'Do you love me?' Think of it! I suppose she thought she'd strike while the iron was hot, but I never took her out again."

"No woman could mean to you what music does, could she, dear?" asked Thérèse softly.

"Of course not. But you never did ask, Thérèse."

"No. Why should I? We're happy together, and you do all the things that you would do anyway. Why should I worry about what you think? But do you think it disgraceful to tell a woman that you love her?"

"Not exactly disgraceful—but so dangerous. I always feel as if I ought to stand beside a fast horse with one foot in the stirrup and the reins in my hand. But, Thérèse, I am awfully fond

of you. I don't think you're the only creature alive on the earth, but I do like to look at you and I like to talk to you and I like to pet you and I'm happier with you than with any one else—and if you'll only stay as you are, I'll always want to come back to you. That's the best I can do, Thérèse. Do you think—any one—could be satisfied with that?"

Thérèse looked down at the boy. He was staring up at her with serious intentness, like a child who makes a difficult explanation and longs to be understood. Richard sometimes looked like that. Ordinarily his face was like a laughing mask or, if something went wrong, it fell into cynical furrows. But occasionally he would grow interested in something and forget himself, and for a moment it would seem as if the eternal child, the lonely boy, the dreamer, looked out through his eyes.

Thérèse, whenever she saw him thus, saw the wistfulness and loneliness of that inner self, knew that it would withdraw like a hurt child if not treated gently and with infinite comprehension, and felt always a tenderness and a dread of harming that wild, elusive thing, which corresponded to something within herself, and she would protect it always, even at the cost of her own pride. She could not do otherwise.

"Yes," she said gently, "it would be quite enough."

"Thérèse," said Richard happily, "you are such a dear!" Then he put out his hand to stroke her silken ankle, as he added, as simply as if he were asking her to drive the next day, "You know, Thérèse, you're such a charming, tempting creature, I'd really like to have you—belong to me. I shall tease you—lots of times—but I won't be angry if you don't say yes. I'll be just the same. Only I wish you would. I don't know why I've waited so long. I never have before."

"Richard dear, I don't think of those

things as many people do, but I'd never give myself to a man unless I cared a great deal about him—not because I think it's so valuable a gift, but because it would put me too much in his power. And I wouldn't for you, anyway."

"Why not for me?"

"Because you'd appreciate it so much less than the others. You've just told me your opinion of women."

"But I told you also my opinion of you. If I have a very low opinion of women in general, and a very high opinion of one in particular, I've gone further for her than the chap who thinks all women are angels. Now why not?"

"You don't want me enough to pay."

"How do you know I don't?"

"I've known men who did. I knew one man who said that a woman always belonged by right to the man who wanted her most."

"And you judge how much they want you by the amount of fuss they make? What would you like me to do—get down on my knees, or stand on my head? Any other reason?"

"Oh, yes." Thérèse looked mischievous. "This place isn't artistic enough. You know, according to my creed, any action is right so long as it's sufficiently beautiful. Now, if I were going to love a man—really—I should insist upon having an exquisite room, furnished in sandalwood and gold and yellow silk," she went on dreamily. "And I should have a big open fire and flowers and candlelight and incense, and I should put on an Egyptian costume and lie before the fire on a great, soft tiger skin, and——"

"Thérèse, stop this minute! You're an imp of Satan! But all those things would make it more wonderful. Now, listen! You think you know some chap who wants you more than I? Well, send for him. Then we'll both start out, and the first one to kill his tiger and make such a place for you shall have you—but he must stalk the beast

himself and kill him single-handed. Put us to the test. Go on—do, Thérèse!"

The girl looked at him in astonishment. He was all fire and enthusiasm. Then suddenly she laughed.

"Richard," she said, "you've planned a perfectly gorgeous adventure for yourself, haven't you? But I'm afraid you'll have to miss it—for I won't send you."

Richard looked at the girl a moment and then he, too, laughed.

"Well, honey," he said, "it would have been heaps of fun."

Then they fell to discussing houses, and bought and furnished one with much merriment and glee. From this they drifted to shops, and Richard told her that he would love to go about with her in a real city.

"I'd like to help you buy all sorts of things," said he, "hats and gowns and frilly, fluffy things. I love those. Would you let me help you pick out silk stockings and corsets and lacy things?"

"Perhaps," was her reply.

They drove back to the hotel, dined, and spent the evening playing chess, which Thérèse said she liked because it looked so medieval. The girl went up early, having letters to write, and Richard drove to the club with some men.

In her own room, Thérèse put on a nightgown of pink silk and lace and threw a chiffon negligee loosely over it. She wrote her letters, then took down her hair. It was growing very late, and she brushed it sleepily and smiled at herself in the mirror.

Then she heard a step far down the corridor and, seized by a sudden caprice, she opened her door a crack and peeped out. Richard was walking slowly toward her, puffing drowsily at a cigarette. Otherwise the hall was empty.

"Richard," she whispered softly, as he reached her door.

"Yes?" he answered happily, stopping short.

"Is this the kind of lacy stuff you like?"

She threw the door open wide and stood there a brief moment with the light behind her—all pink and white and diaphanous, with her long, black hair loose about her. Then, "Good night," she cooed and closed the door, while Richard still stood and gaped.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed at last and put out a cautious hand to try the door. It was locked. He hesitated an instant and then went on, but he smiled to himself the rest of the way down the corridor.

## CHAPTER XII.

Señor Róderigo Garida, barefooted, uncoated, and looking as fat and blowsy as a middle-aged woman without her stays, swung slowly back and forth in his big grass hammock and fanned himself with a huge palm-leaf fan. He was a man who would have been accounted rich in any capital in the world, but his Panamaian town house consisted of a series of big, barren, square rooms, above one of his own *bodegas*, or warehouses, which was built out over the high-water line, so that the rear balcony of his abode commanded a beautiful view of the bay, when the tide was in, and an uninspiring stretch of mud flats when the tide was out.

It was the day after his interview with Robinson. It was also the day upon which Thérèse Kennedy had promised to drive and to take tea with him at El Club Union, and, therefore, a red-letter day, for Thérèse had been much occupied of late and it had been difficult to make an engagement with her.

Although he had especial reason for wishing to look well, Señor Garida's dressing that day was absent-minded. He was genuinely, and with Spanish completeness, in love with Thérèse. Moreover, this was an affair in which his head and heart clasped hands, for

the woman, to an astonishing degree, answered all his requirements in a wife—and Señor Garida had made up his mind to marry. He was approaching fifty, he had had his fill of garçon pleasures of all kinds, he had amassed an enormous fortune through his various connections with the government, and had attracted some attention outside of his own country by his political maneuvering against Colombia, at the time of the burlesque Panamaian revolution—maneuvering for which he had, of course, been well recompensed by the United States—so that the time now seemed ripe for him to withdraw from his picturesque little opera-bouffe country and to enter upon a larger field—namely Paris, the Mecca of all socially ambitious and sufficiently wealthy South Americans.

And what could so well assist his purpose as a well-born and beautiful French wife? That she happened, also, to be the woman whom at the moment he most ardently desired was a double stroke of good fortune. Quite obviously, she had been patterned and sent there for him, and the presumptuous interference of "that young English adventurer" was not to be tolerated.

On the other hand, Garida came from a line of fine old Spanish *caballeros* and had received the education and training of a gentleman, and, therefore, felt an honest repugnance toward the idea of connivance with Robinson.

"A knife in the back, on a good dark night, would be a lot more decent than mixing up with that cur—and bringing business into it."

His fingers tingled and itched at the thought, for with his race—even yet—love is sometimes accounted a great enough matter to justify killing. But Garida was living in an age that for the most part holds material interests higher than those of the heart. To kill Richard would indeed give him a moment of keen and elemental satis-

faction, but it would also place his own life in jeopardy. He was in no sense a coward, but he had a fine, fat, successful career to round out, and the instincts of his age won a swift and sure victory over those of his race.

"Ay—*caramba!* Perhaps nothing of the sort will be needed," he consoled himself with a shrug, as he climbed into his carriage, looking, in spite of his abstraction, well groomed to the verge of overdone-ness.

He found Thérèse in a gracious mood. She was feeling happy and gracious these days and, too, she really liked the Panamaian, who combined an unusual amount of spontaneous sincerity with his Latin enthusiasm and who, in his own quite different and far less distinctive way, was as honestly true to himself as was Richard. Their drive was an amusing one, filled with repeated attempts, on the part of the Panamaian, to create an atmosphere of thrills and tenderness, and with adroit renderings of such atmospheric possibilities by Thérèse—all of this carried on amidst showers and sparkles of brilliant repartee, for there was nothing primitive about the intellect of either of them and even the lover took delight in the clash of wits and was content, for the moment, with the play of words, which added fuel to his flame while keeping it within bounds.

But when, late in the afternoon, they found themselves seated at last at a little round table on the stone balcony of the Union Club, with the sparkling blue sea spread before them, the scent of jasmine wafting upward from the court below, and no sound to disturb them except the occasional faint clicking of the ivory dominoes with which a few old gentlemen were whiling away their time on the lower gallery, the man determined to assert himself and to put an end to persiflage. He pushed aside his plate of caviar sandwiches so suddenly that Thérèse was startled by the

movement and, reaching across the table, placed his plump, well-kept hand over her slender one.

"Beautiful lady," he declared abruptly, "you are keeping me waiting too long. The time for fencing is over. I am quite mad about you—I adore you—I offer you all that I have. When will you become my wife?"

"You really wish to marry me?" queried the woman dreamily. "Are you sure that is what you wish—or—are you not quite sane?"

Garida could not know that only the night before Richard had said to Thérèse, "No sane man could want to ask a woman to marry him," and had said it in such a way that he had destroyed within her the age-old, feminine illusion that a woman might be all sufficient, indispensable, and enduringly attractive to a man. She had not quite lost the dream, but she knew it to be hopeless and slightly ridiculous. Garida, however, faced traditions rather than realities and therefore exploded:

"Am I sane? As sane as I can be, while wanting you so!"

How droll it was—that unconscious, self-deceiving admission! Thérèse had her answer and smiled at it somewhat bitterly, but the man went on, before she could speak:

"You won't have to stay here. I'll take you to Paris immediately. You shall have everything your heart can desire—jewels, motor cars, everything. See." He began to fumble in his pocket and at length extracted a small green satin case. "This is for you."

He pressed a spring, and the lid flew open, disclosing an enormous diamond set in an antique circlet of carved gold. It was a gorgeous stone, and Thérèse loved such things. She bent forward and touched it lightly with a caressing finger tip.

"It belonged to my mother," went on Señor Garida, "and I have preserved it

for my wife. Grant me your permission to place it upon your finger," he concluded with a courtliness that became him.

This dignified gallantry prejudiced Thérèse in his favor. There were reasons why she needed a protector, and it was perfectly conceivable that with Señor Garida—and his vast fortune—her path might be made a pleasant one. In all of her delicious comradeship with Richard there was nothing to shape the course of her future, nothing of the security which marriage with this worldly Spaniard would provide. And there was something appealing, too, in the conventionality of his love-making. Most women are a bit afraid of the truth, and Thérèse's mind had not yet reached its full stature. Richard was a fay and—she could not live in fairyland. Also, the time was coming when she must decide upon something. And yet—

Garida saw that she wavered, instead of making an immediate and coquettish rejoinder, as always heretofore, and he hastened to push his advantage.

"I adore you," he whispered softly, and leaned toward her. "You are so beautiful—so splendid. We can do magnificent things in Paris, you and I."

He said this craftily, knowing well that his personal appeal to her was not enough. For himself, he was consumed with desire and was fast losing his control; as he talked, he slipped further and further into abandon.

"To have you in my arms! Ah—if once you would say to me, 'Love me!' and sink half fainting—I am choked when I think of you! I walk up and down my chamber at night! No, I am not sane! I am crazy—mad—for you!"

He ground his teeth together and struck himself dramatically upon the breast. Then he pushed away the table from between them, as one flicks away a fly, and flopped onto his knees beside her chair.

"I will love you always!" he cried, seizing both of her hands in his and piously rolling up his eyes. "I swear by my grandmother's grave that I will love you forever!"

To do him justice, Garida was not half ridiculous, for his emotion was genuine, he was expressing it quite naturally after the manner of his country, and he was offering in good faith all that a man can offer. But Thérèse, unfortunately, was in no mood to do him justice, for, in vivid contrast to the melodrama of his wooing, there floated before the girl's eyes the vision of a wistful face, and in her ears rang the echo of a boyish voice saying, "That's the best I can do, Thérèse. Do you think—any one—could be satisfied with that?"

What absurd pretense, what pitiful play-acting was the love-making of all the world in comparison with the brave words of a dreaming boy who for a moment had stripped himself and her of all but reality! For a flashing second, she felt in her own heart the pain of the never-ending quest of the dreamer, who goes through life seeking, not the gratification of any material desire, but an infinite comprehension—of the idealist, foredoomed to failure because his dreams are higher than anything the world can give him—and then and there she dedicated her understanding to Richard, although she knew very well that, for the contenting of her own complex nature, she would have to wander far and often. It was a complete gift that she made, independent of what she might receive in return.

With the unconscious cruelty of a woman absorbed in her thoughts of an absent man, Thérèse actually forgot Garida for a second, and when she suddenly became aware that he was kneeling at her feet, she did an inexcusable thing, one for which she bitterly reproached herself long afterward. She laughed.



Garida sprang, as quickly as his avoirdupois would permit, to his feet.

"Is that your answer?" he demanded fiercely.

Her repentance was immediate.

"Ah," she cried, and impulsively thrust her hands deeper into his, "I did not mean to hurt! I know that it is an honor you pay me, and I am not unappreciative. I was only thinking—a silly, woman's thought. Forgive me!"

She was very sweet and girlish in her contrition and "a woman's whims are forever unreasonable." Garida was somewhat mollified, but still ruffled and, more than that, wounded. He thrust the ring case absently back into his pocket and then walked a few steps away from her and stood leaning against the stone railing, with his eyes fixed on the purple sea. When he again turned them toward Thérèse, they were full of tears.

"*Querida mia*," he said brokenly, "I love you very much."

It was a part of the tragedy of Richard that, whenever he told the truth about himself, he seemed to be telling it about the world. Never again would it be possible for Thérèse to feel confident that she was really loved, as a woman defines the word. Still, she was deeply touched by Garida's obvious longing, and she had never liked him so much. She rose, crossed over to him, and slipped her hand into his.

"My heart is not unkind," she whispered gently.

"Then you will!" he cried exultantly and, with the unexpected suddenness that characterizes the quick motions of the generally languid Southerner, he swept her into a big, warm, cushiony embrace.

Thérèse permitted herself to rest against him for just a second and then drew away.

"I don't know," she said. "I do like you immensely, but it isn't just the way you care for me—yet. And—I—"

"But it never is, with a woman, until after she's married. I will make you care for me."

"You forget—perhaps—that I am not a young girl."

"I will love you so much that you will have to respond."

"But I want a little more time—a wee bit more of freedom. Please be patient just a little longer and then—I promise to give you a definite answer."

"How can I wait? What do you mean by 'a little longer'? Set a time and I will try. To-morrow—next week?"

Thérèse fumbled desperately in her mind for something that would set a limit to her indecision. She felt that she ought to accept him, and the idea was by no means altogether disagreeable to her, but she did so want to put it off—oh, endlessly!

"Wait—at least—until after carnival," she stammered at last, that being the only respite which came into her mind.

"But that is weeks away!"

"Only three—and I think—I think perhaps I will say what you wish me to. Only I must—I must—"

Her voice died away. She was being honest, for she did believe that she would eventually consent to marry him, but it was by no means the certain assurance for which Garida took it. He assumed, now, that he could afford to wait, and with a return to his former gallantry, he kissed her hand.

"Dear lady," he said, "I know that it is a woman's way, but do not be too hard upon my impatience, I beg of you."

At that moment, a waiter who had been poking his head above the top step of the little stone stairway at regular intervals during the past half hour, and then tactfully withdrawing it, like a well-trained jack-in-the-box, determined to venture forth. The Southern servant is nothing if not sympathetic where love-making is in progress, and this one mounted the steps noisily, flap-

ping his straw sandals and calling shrill commands to some one in the court below. Garida turned toward him with some asperity.

"Pardon, señor, but a *muchacho* from the *presidencia* brought this packet some moments ago. He says that you told him to bring the papers to you here and that he is to wait while you sign them."

"Ah, si," admitted Señor Garida, "I did tell him to bring them here, if they had to be attended to to-night. Will you pardon me, dear lady, if I glance at these stupid things? It will take but a moment, and they can not go on with this business without my signature. May I offer you anything? A little more wine? Let me insist."

"I thank you, no—nothing but a cigarette, please. And attend to your papers by all means. Then I think we must go on. It is growing late."

The waiter made haste to set an empty table before Señor Garida and brought pen and ink. Then he removed the dishes from the tea table and set it beside Thérèse, placing cigarettes, matches, and ash tray at her disposal, and last, either through force of habit or with some vague idea of providing entertainment for the lady while she waited, he added a set of dominoes and a dice box to the collection of articles at her elbow and departed.

Thérèse smoked and dreamed in silence, her face turned toward the water and one white arm resting along the balustrade. Señor Garida skimmed hurriedly first one paper and then another, signing each before laying it aside. At length he paused with an ejaculation of annoyance.

"*Caramba!* Fools! I told them I wasn't ready to settle this matter now! Why the devil did they send this over to-night? They are all loco!"

"Eh—what did you say? I beg your pardon?" queried Thérèse, politely recalling her wandering thoughts at the sound of his voice.

"Oh, nothing. I was merely sputtering over the stupidity of one of my colleagues. He's sent over a concession which I'm not ready to sign. In fact, I haven't quite decided to which of two men I'll give it." He smiled a bit importantly, for he had a rather likable Latin vanity and loved to make much of his place in the president's cabinet.

Thérèse knew that nothing delighted him so much as recognition of, and interest in, his political activities, and therefore asked curiously:

"Do you have final decisions in the giving of all of your government concessions?"

"But certainly—that is my particular work. This, for instance, is a plan — Would you like to know about it? It is an indiscretion—a confidence, you understand, although, to be sure, a not very important one. But there is a scheme afoot to build a great race track and to try to make Panama a big racing center during the winter months—after the canal is open. It will have both advantages and disadvantages—but it will probably make a lot of money for us."

"And there are two men, both of whom wish to obtain the concession to put it through?"

"As it happens, yes."

"Upon what, then, will you base your decision?"

Garida looked at her narrowly. Was it possible that she knew anything? Living a life of intrigue himself, it was inevitable that he should be ready to suspect every one, but the woman's eyes were clear and frank, and he rebuked himself for his fleeting thought.

It was not altogether vanity that had led him to so much expansiveness. It was really a singular coincidence that that concession should have been sent to him that afternoon! Robinson's proposals concerning it were horribly on his mind and, gambler that he was, he could hardly fail to feel the hand of Fate in the unexpected arrival of those

particular papers, following fast upon his declaration to Thérèse. He preferred to win her fairly, if he could, but he was determined to have her at any cost, and she had not actually consented. Perhaps it would be wiser to get rid of Richard Montgomery at once, even if it did entail a sort of partnership with the despised Robinson.

Garida was superstitious, and the longer he considered it, the more significant seemed the occurrence. He could not quite make up his mind how to use it, but as he talked, he came to the conclusion that it was undoubtedly an unique opportunity of some sort. Fate had set the stage, and while he attempted to adjust his ideas to the play, he rambled on in a vague, indefinite monologue, enlarging upon the benefits that might accrue to the city out of the building of a race track.

Thérèse eventually became bored and, as usual upon such occasions, was attacked by an imp of mischief.

"Why fuss and worry about it?" she broke in saucily. "Why don't you let me decide it for you? You said at first that is wasn't so very important anyway—and think what it would mean to me to know that I had actually controlled men's destinies for once! I've always longed to be a court favorite. Give me a taste."

Garida could hardly believe his ears. Was this the intention of Fate? The opportunity was obvious surely, and yet—it was premature and a bit hard on the girl—and Garida was a very decent sort, except when it was necessary for him to be otherwise.

"You scarcely know what you ask," he parried. "Your choice might have consequences for which you would hate to take the responsibility."

"Who's afraid? And I won't know anything about the consequences anyway."

Still Garida hesitated. Then his eyes fell suddenly upon the dice box, and the gambler's solution came like a spark of inspiration. He laughed shortly.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he cried, and Thérèse was surprised at the note of recklessness in his voice. "We'll play to see who wins it. One man is R and the other B. Choose your own man and play for him."

Thérèse's eyes sparkled. All of the R's in the world meant Richard to her, just then, and she delighted in the whimsical possibility that she might be playing for him.

"I play for R," she decided promptly, "and we throw but once."

Garida's hand trembled slightly as he picked up the box and handed it to Thérèse.

"I want the excitement of playing last," she begged.

Garida threw and bent over the table.

"Double fours," he announced with some triumph.

Thérèse shook a long time and then cast the dice desperately. At the last moment she was a little flurried and felt that there was something in all of this which she did not quite understand. She was half afraid to look, but conquered herself immediately.

"I've won!" she cried. "Double fives! R gets it!"

"R wins," repeated Señor Garida gravely. He drew forward the last paper, inserted the name Lycurgus Robinson, and signed "Garida," with a firm hand.

"And now," said Thérèse, "I've done enough mischief for my first day at court. Please take me home."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



# Indian Giver

By Gladys Hall

Author of "The Way of the Sibyl," etc.



MARY ALICE HARPER went on a tour of inspection through the four rooms of the apartment for the last—and dozenth—time. She went through them as one goes through a place one is about to leave after a death. They had been *her* rooms—exclusively, deliciously hers. She had the sense of possession rather fiercely. This was the first place, these were the first things, that ever had been hers exclusively. One of seven children in a small suburban home where neither space nor money had been prodigal, she had had to do considerable sharing. She was innately, almost fanatically fastidious. She had hated the sharing. It had meant for her a series of intrusions.

Sometimes she tried to account for the mad act of a year ago by thinking to herself that she must have done it for the sake of this privacy. In her heart, she knew the falsity of this, since she had not known until afterward that Peter was going to insist on an apartment. It was only one of the appallingly many things she had not known, did not know now, about Peter. Even his name had an unfamiliar ring. Peter Harper! Why, he was a stranger, this Peter. He was the veriest stranger—and he was coming to-night, coming in a few hours, to these rooms as their lord and master, to her as her husband. It was unutterably bold and wrong.

Mary Alice Harper went into her room and laid her head down on the newly hemstitched runner of her dressing table. She tried to think and she found it hard. She had evaded consecutive thought for a year as a sort of protective barrage. There was always, she remembered, a moment of reckoning. Hers was come.

It had all been a matter of martial music, anyway, of impending departures over mined waters, of flying flags and splendor and blood that raced crazily along forbidden courses. A time of hasty, violent loves and violent, sensational deeds. It had been, with her, a reaction from twenty-three years of staidly normal routine living. She had never had the little foibles of most girls, the whimsicalities, the fads and fevers. She had concentrated her follies into one, into a tremendous, far-reaching one.

She hadn't thought of him as a *man*, anyway. Did he dare to suppose that she had? Was he daring to come home to her this way—assuming all things? She hadn't thought of him at all as a personage to reckon with. She had thought of him only as a child, a little boy; a little boy with bright eyes and bright hair and a ridiculously make-believe uniform; a small boy with a great bravado. She had thought of him as a child going forth to face a tremendous danger, to play a breathless,

heartless game, to face destruction terribly and innocently. He had turned to her for comforting before he went into that maw of death. He had turned to her for a moment of life, facing eternity. He had turned to her in the only way he knew of—to her heart, asking, as man always asks, for a largesse of love.

There had been moments of exaltation—how mad, how mad!

"I want some one to fight for," he had told her. How his eyes had flashed! "Some one whose name I can mutter if I should come to die—with a *right*. I want to have you to pray to, Mary, if God should ever get too far away out there." How his hair had glinted in that brave blare of sunlight!

She had married him.

They had been married in the early morning after they had known one another for precisely four days. It had been a brave morning, Mary remembered now, bravely rose and gold. Above Fifth Avenue the Allied flags had fluttered, refulgent and resplendent. They had walked down to the Little Church under them, together. Oh, it had been "together"—Mary did not deny that, even in this gray moment. She simply had not been thinking—that was it; she had not been reasoning. She had merely been feeling—nothing more. She pressed her face, grown suddenly scarlet, against the sharp edge of the dressing table. She felt swept by a frenzy of shame of herself. The flags, the music, the endless partings, the endless recession—that had been the pulsing world she had lived in. Nature, desperate, had waved a red flag in her face, and she had snatched at it.

She had not thought then that she did not know Peter Harper, that he was a stranger. She had felt as if she were in a crucible with him, of flame and blood and tears.

When they had walked up Fifth Avenue again after the ceremony, the glow had persisted. It seemed as if the flags formed for them a triumph arch—for them and what they had done, for their bright defiance of eternal farewells, for their cleavage in the teeth of so much separation.

Mary Alice simply could not understand it now. She tried to, but she couldn't. She couldn't sense that feeble creature who had been herself. She must have been mad who had always been sane. She must have lost the sense of balance she had always maintained so exquisitely. She must have been reeling drunk under the red planet of Mars.

Peter Harper had been a nice enough boy—no doubt of that. He had been a very nice boy. But there were a great many nice boys whom it would be unthinkable for her to receive into this home of hers. It had become equally unthinkable of her to receive Peter Harper.

He had become the figure of a mirage through which she had lived, herself, yet not herself. Perhaps—she sat up, running her fingers through her banded hair—perhaps he would realize all this himself. He *had* seemed nice. Perhaps he had asked her to meet him, just as she was going to comply with the asking, merely from a sense of duty, dry as dust, merely as a matter of compulsory good form. Perhaps he would know at once that they were strangers who, in a crowded hour of folly, had done a foolish thing.

It had been a year ago, eleven months, to be exact. Nothing vital had come of it. It was a dead issue. Peter Harper would not expect more than an amicable parting, some sort of dissolution. He would not dare—nor wish, perhaps—to come thudding back into her life, with fanfare and with trumpeting. It would be defilement, horrible and abnormal. It had been

an adventure, but her thirst for adventure was quenched and slaked.

She reverted again to their wedding day, fantastical and unreal. They had walked up the Avenue under the valiant flags. Peter had done all the talking. He had seemed to feel a torrential need of words. He had talked as if, any instant, a dam would burst and his soul would come gushing forth at her very feet. He had seemed to feel that his time for talking was necessarily short. She had felt that he was endeavoring desperately to give her a complete revelation of himself.

"Odd that I should find you so soon before I go," he had said. "Seems as if God is sort of trying to compromise with me. You've given me an awful lot, Mary, a tremendous lot—all my dreams—everything sweet and fine a fellow dreams of, ever—and the meaning of things. I know what a woman is now, Mary. I know wonderfully, dear. It's all thanks to you. There has never been anybody else, Mary. Pretty faces—passing—but they always passed—moonlight and dancing—summertime—all that sort of harmless, usual thing, but, Mary, never this deep, sweet, *satisfying* thing. You satisfy me so, Mary."

How his hair had caught the sun and held it! How his voice had throbbed and thrilled and broken! How he had said her name, loving it so!

Mary Alice remembered that she had not heard half of all that he had said. He had been just her little boy that day; going forth to the raw din of battle, the young crusader setting a wronged world free. She could only stroke his arm, stroke his bright bronze hair.

Shameful memories! She closed her eyes and hid her face in her hands. She had been prodigal, broken, vehement, un-Mary-Alicelike!

They had lunched alone in a shad-

owy, quiet little place. She forgot whether he had taken tea or coffee. Perhaps he hadn't eaten at all. Ridiculous! The situation grew more intolerable, the more she reflected on it. She didn't know what he liked in any way at all. She didn't know a single thing about him. A surface thing—glittering, but superficial—that was what she had done.

He had told her that he wanted to get a little apartment for her to live in while he was away. She had protested. Probably—more food for shame—she had not protested very vigorously, since he had gained his point.

"I must have a home as well as a wife," he had urged. "I want to be able to think of you in a place I have seen, Mary Alice, a place where you will be waiting for me. I want to be able to picture you at different hours of the day—a woman, mine, in a home mine. That is all a man fights for, dear, when he fights best. It will make me happy, Mary, so happy and so safe. I *couldn't* go West, dearest, before I came home to you."

He had looked so wistful when he had said that, so wistful and so very grave and still. She had simply crumpled. What a fool she had been—impulsive—impressionable and silly!

They had found the apartment, agreeing almost at once.

"The sun will shine into your room almost all day," he had told her enthusiastically. "You can have some pots of flowers and even a bird here in all this sun, Mary Alice."

She hated potted flowers, prisoned, abortive things; she hated caged birds. What a stranger he was to her—to her thoughts, to her dreams and desires! She shuddered, sitting very straight and rigid in her chair.

"I'll see you eating your breakfast here," he had told her as they had inventoried the possibilities of the "fair-sized room" which would serve



as combination living room and dining room. "I'll see the coffee steaming, the fruit in a bowl, your darling little hands, Mary Alice, moving about."

What could she have been thinking of? To allow a boy whom she had met casually, four days before, at a Red Cross dance, to talk to her like that? Shame on her! She had certainly been living a reaction. That was it—a reaction from twenty-three years of penurious living, emotionally and every other way, doing penurious little things, always *little* things, dreaming careful little dreams—never a sweeping gesture, never a pagan stroke.

They had taken a lease on the apartment then and there, and then, still dazedly as it seemed to her now, she had allowed him to explain the details of a bank account to her and extract a promise from her that she would buy extra furnishings and make herself "all comfy." She heard herself telling him, obediently, that she would "wait for him, pray for him, love him more and more."

She hadn't done any of these things. She had lived in the apartment—that was all. She hadn't been waiting for him at all—not as a vital, living man who would one day return. She had just been going on as usual in a round of small events. She had kept her secretarial job. She had paid her own way. She had merely changed her name and her dwelling place, which had required a little explanation—that was all. She had just gone on living her peaceful little life with a dream that grew dimmer and dimmer and less and less real, with the memory of a mad act that receded further and further as the actualities of every day took more insistent form and substance. Now he was coming back, into these rooms, which were exclusively hers; into her heart, which was almost her own exclusively.

It was all impossible. She was cold

now, practical and afraid. The magic of the flying flags, the lilt of that sacrificial music, the outgoing tug of the grand recessional, all had subsided—and left her plain Mary Alice Harper, if she must bear this stranger's stranger name. He had come into her life when life had been a distortion, a flash of lightning among the martial thundering and bombardment; like the lightning he had gone, and the rent was healed.

She wondered what had made her fly about so after his wire had come, cleaning, dusting, altering, uprooting. Instinct, no doubt. The female for the festive male returning with the spoils of war. She had even laundered the crisp Swiss curtains and polished the silver on the dressing table till the sunlight Peter Harper loved sought it out, piece by piece. She had piled fruit, high and golden, in the blue bowl on the gate-legged dining table and put on the best filet mignon. After everything was done, not once, but many anxious times, she had shampooed her long dark hair and run blue ribbons through her lingerie. No doubt he would want food—returning warriors are legendarily and popularly a-hunger—so she had telephoned out for mushrooms and a steak, a bottle of port wine, and some real cream. All these things she did mechanically, automatically. There was an immovable obstruction in her throat and an iciness of death on her hands and feet.

She thought of her family and longed, quite childishly, for her mother. She thought of their amazement when she had told them of her war-bride marriage and of their rather horrid conciliatoriness when, by prudent inquiry, they had found that Peter Harper was the only son of Mrs. Patience Harper, a remarried widow with rather ample means and no children "by the second."

"With the *second*," explained Mary Alice's mother to a reluctant Mary

Alice, "Mrs. Ketchem tells me your Peter does not get on, so his mother makes him an allowance, and they have agreed to disagree. Young Harper has quite a practice, too, Mrs. Ketchem hears—as a consulting engineer, I think she said. You've done a very silly, flighty thing on the face of it, Mary Alice, and I won't say that papa and the girls and I are not surprised—we are—but you seem to have landed on your feet, so papa and I forgive you."

Mary Alice wasn't thinking now of Peter Harper's money, his mother, or his profession. She was thinking of him as mere man coming to her in the buffoonery of husbandhood.

Peter Harper had begged her to meet him, quite verbosely for a wire. He had seemed urgent. Mary Alice could see him now, coming down the gang-plank, the terrible, victorious male. She thought with a shudder of a line or so she had overheard in her office the other day.

"Yes," a man had said, "when the boys come back, they'll be in the habit of just taking possession. They'll go right on doing it."

At four, she made ready to meet him, with hands that were unsteady and a face that stared back at her set and white.

"You look," she addressed herself, "as if you were about to meet a bogey man."

Still, it would be wiser to meet him in the rational stir of other people. She could tell him better there, bid him a saner, even a jauntier farewell. He would get a better sense of the whole thing.

She put on, after a bit of hesitation, her new straw hat, her soft gray cape, and her fur. Her face looked different, she thought, from what it had the morning she had said good-by to him, there on the deck, one with a myriad other women holding their men to their hearts.

Then, her eyes had had a brilliant glow, almost as if she had fever. Her mouth had been humid and red. Her body had felt palpitant, a flower giving forth a perfume aromatic and vitalizing.

She decided now that she was losing her looks. There was a strain about her mouth, a hint of hardness. Her eyes had a stare, not so steady as stony. Her youth had drawn a veil across its palpable invitation. Still, being a woman, one had to— There were invasions—

When she went out into the late afternoon, she bought a handful of jonquils, sprightly and gay. No use in making anything funereal and morbid out of this thing. It was just a hugely funny mistake, which might have been a tragedy, but was not. She might as well greet this buoyant, confident stranger in a pal-ish, sensible manner; just be matter of fact about it—that was all.

It didn't come to Mary Alice that she looked any different from the many other women waiting for the transport to dock. Most of the faces were white and evident of a long sleeplessness. She looked about her and felt a sense of impatience with these women for their yearning for their men. Why couldn't other interests atone—work, their friends, their children? Why were they here so obviously hungry and needy? Why need their need be so terrible and strong?

Mary Alice felt a bit contemptuous. She had regained her balance and her poise. She eyed the dim advancing of the laden transport steadily, calm amid the rising hysteria, the babel and murmur and occasional shrillness of a child's voice smiting the moist, strong rafters of the dock, making them quiver in their rank humidity.

There was fear about her everywhere—fear of what was to come, of what they might see, individually and collectively, fear of something hideous and

unlooked for, fear of some mistake with a consequent disappointment almost too poignant for endurance.

Mary Alice had fear only for herself.

She had no fear of what France had done to Peter Harper, but of what Peter Harper, back in America, was to do with her.

The men were coming down the gangplank in double file. There were flashes of incredible faces, masking incredible horrors or revealing incredible joys, tumultuous faces, almost all of them, disproportionate emotions. Mary Alice wondered whether anything in life warranted all this. She closed her eyes, and they leaped at her again—faces young, stern, glad, all of them tremendously stirred. There was one gray face, gray above the careless uniform, one face grown very old, one face afraid. Mary Alice watched this face with a curious detachment.

"What has France done to you?" she muttered to herself, momentarily forgetful of the young Peter. "Poor thing—poor thing!"

Her mind warmed a bit. She felt a pang of sympathy with the crowd. She could see his hair where the late red sun touched it, and his hair was lifeless. He was spent.

"My, that's awful!" she thought again. "I hope some woman——" Then she shook off the somehow incriminating thought. How would young Peter Harper come to her?

The line seeped near to its end. There were shouts, random cries and sobs, unleashed laughter, curiously shaky and unmirthful, little squeals and screams. Peter Harper was not there. Mary Alice grew cold with she knew not what. The man with the gray face was about to step from the gangplank. He was speaking to her.

"Here I am, Mary," he said. "What do you do for a man like me?"

His voice was grayer than his gray

face. Mary Alice had the fleeting sense that of all the incredible faces his was the most incredible. The martial music of him—where was it gone? The stir, the thròb, the promise? How had they dared?

He held out his hand, tentatively, and she found herself taking it in both of her own and holding it, and she found that her hands were no longer cold, but warm and sheltering. Then, standing there in that overwrought crowd, she felt that her eyes were wet. She looked up at Peter Harper. His eyes were dry. The tears were her own.

He didn't speak because he couldn't. She managed to say:

"I prayed for you, Peter."

"Yes, I know," he answered.

They were making their slow way through the crowds. He walked with the sag of the knees peculiar to old men.

"Let's have supper?" she asked him. "You must be hungry."

"At home," he said, "but I'm not very hungry to-night."

"I've a nice supper," said Mary Alice, and forgot that she was going to send him elsewhere. Where else could she send this ineffably tired man? Where else could he go save to the home he had feathered against his safe return?

"I didn't reckon on this," said Peter Harper; he added grimly, "Nerves—all gone."

"You'll come through."

"Never the same, Mary Alice. Too much of me gone, I'm afraid." He dragged out the words.

"We'll take a taxi," said Mary Alice recklessly.

"That'll be best," assented Peter.

He clambered in after her, holding on to her helping hand. He had to try twice to make the step. His forehead was beaded with perspiration.

"How high the infernal things are!"

he said peevishly. Mary Alice had a horrible fear that he was going to cry.

He made no comment on the scrupulous state of the apartment. He didn't appear to notice that the flowers he had suggested were not there, nor the caged bird. She made him lie down on the couch and, when she was ready, it took some time to rouse him from a sleep akin to death. He ate almost nothing and nodded while she talked. He seemed to her to be beyond any sort of effort.

"Shall we call a doctor to-night?" she asked.

"Not to-night. I've tried them. Time—that's all, if anything. Won't you talk to me, though? A woman's voice—I keep hearing—things."

Mary Alice smiled at him.

"Let's wait until to-morrow," she said. "You're so tired. When you're in bed, I'll stroke your head—perhaps sing to you a little. Would you like that?"

"That would be fine," said Peter.

When he was sleeping, Mary Alice crept back to the living room. Once again, she was not thinking; she was only seeing that gray face, those nerveless hands, those knees that sagged like an old, old man's. Her brow was knotted in perplexity. After a long while she laid her head in the hollow his head had made in the cushion of the couch, and slept.

The next morning she helped him to dress, helped him into the living room, got him hot coffee, crisp rolls, a bowl of fruit.

Afterward he asked if he might smoke, and she thought that some shattered bits of his youth seemed trying to creep together.

"There's a lot of sunshine here," he said, when he was smoking. Mary Alice nodded at him, leaning on her elbow and toying with her half-finished coffee. "Let's not talk about—war," he added.

"All right-o," said Mary Alice. She smiled at him again.

"You were with me all the time," he said. "Do you mind? Down in the hell of it, with me. I couldn't help it, Mary. You seemed to stay. Of course—you would."

Mary Alice poured herself more coffee. "Of course—you would."

"Down in that caldron," Peter Harper was saying in his tired voice, "you were with me all of the time. I was afraid I'd lose you. That was most of all my fear. Coming over, too, that fear nearly did for me. You know, Mary, once, when I was a little kid, I used to play with a little girl. You remind me of her a little—just in looks. She had dark, steady eyes like yours and a red mouth—like yours. She was awfully sweet and tempting. She used to give me apples—Lord, such big, red, juicy ones!—and chewing gum and licorice sticks, and just as I'd put one to my mouth, she'd snatch it away. She was all the time doing that. I'd get into a regular fury. 'Indian Giver!' I'd yell at her, and after a while she got to go by that name. She was forever up to that trick. She'd do the same thing with everything—pencils, a ball, anything—and then, just when you'd need 'em most, she'd yank 'em away. I—Mary, don't condemn me, but I got to be afraid that you—you might do that to me. You might—might yank yourself away—now when I need you most. I—don't speak yet, dear—I know *need* isn't much to put at your feet, and I'm too shattered to speak of love, but only a woman like you, Mary, deep and very tender— A man's need of a woman like you, Mary—Do you understand?"

Mary spoke thinly.

"Do you think," she asked, "what we did—do you think it was—well, *real*?"

The gray face in the sunlight gave a sort of smile.

"Of all real things," he said, "the realest. I learned—over there. Not other things—but that. Why, Mary, you haven't forgotten the tidal wave of it! You haven't, have you, Mary?"

His lean hands were twisting his "smoke." Mary watched them in a new agony. His hair, in that sunlight, mourning its own lost gold, his valiant eyes, his quenched eagerness— A little boy, badly hurt.

"Mary!" he said again. His voice was shrill with the fear he had spoken of.

Mary means "mother"—Mary, the Mother of God. All women are Marys because all women are mothers.

Mary Alice found herself on the floor clutching his hands to her pitiful breast, holding them there, pressing them there again and again; found herself reaching up for his head, drawing its impoverished gold to her heart, crooning over him in a fierce agony of protection, her tears falling.

"Say it, Mary," he was whispering brokenly. "Say it—if you can."

Mothers of men, all of them—women the mothers of men, first, before all else—first and last.

"Mary!" he was pleading.

"I love you," she told him, holding him close to her heart. "It is real, dear. Peter, Peter, I love you!"



### TO FIAMETTA

SINCE you have gone away, my life's a room  
That's darkened with unending midnight gloom;  
Though it is summer now, and tree with tree  
Weaves in the wind a green, far-tossing sea,  
I shun the golden presence of the day,  
Since you have gone away.

Each dawn's a ghost that strays abroad in vain  
Despite its sun, its rainbows, and soft rain;  
Empty to me—as to the sightless dead  
A flower blooming brightly overhead—  
Life is a word I would no longer say,  
Since you have gone away.

Return, return, restore my stricken sight;  
Redeem me from your absence; bring the light  
Of living day again; lead summer back;  
Like a great ship that makes a shining track,  
Bring Love, Life's Word; be my Eternal Day,  
And go no more away!

HARRY KEMP.



# More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Tzu Hsi:

"The Tiger Empress of China"

**T**HE noble Manchu family of Hwei Cheng was in a bad way.

The gods seemed to have turned their backs on this, the once powerful and prosperous branch of the Nala Clan. The father, mother, and three children had drifted from place to place, in the hopes of changing their luck. Finally they had come to a halt in Canton—for the best of reasons. Their dwindling fortunes had at last melted quite away.

The father, folding his arms, faced his wife and children with Oriental calm and the eyes of a fatalist.

"It is all over, my dear ones," he said monotonously. "We are forsaken of the gods. It is not intended that we live longer. Food we have none—our clothes are all but gone. There is but one honorable road left to us—to die as befits our noble birth. Rather than live as beggars, we will die as our revered ancestors would have us die—here and now, while we are still—"

"No, no!" interrupted a frightened childish voice. "There is another way, my father! A better way! I—"

"What better way than that which thy father points out, child?" questioned the old nobleman sternly. "This is no time for girlish prattle!"

"I beseech thee, dear father, listen! I have a plan—a wise plan, it seems to me. Perchance the exalted gods put it

into my head. Let me be sold into slavery for a good price!"

As she spoke, the little maid knelt with submissive and beseeching back, but with her almond eyes and plum-blossom face the picture of determination. She did not intend to die, however the others might feel about it.

"Often and often has it been said that I am well favored," she went on, raising her arms in pleading, as she crouched at her father's feet. "I am strong and well. My teeth are white as the heart of a nut. Sell me as a slave, dear father! Thou knowest my feet are smaller than those of any girl in Peking. Surely I should bring a price that will save you all! My ear"—she seized the lobe of one of her ears in her tiny, almond-shaped finger ends—"see! Is it not small and delicate? And my hair is longer than most, and dense as ebony. Say yes—I beg, father! The world is too beautiful to die in—it was made for us to live in!"

While the little Chinese girl stammered her strange petition, her mother and the other two children gazed stolidly at her, hardly seeming to comprehend. Finally the child had her way.

"Get up," her father said grimly. "It shall be as you wish. The gods alone can tell if good will come of it or no!"

Jumping to her feet, and brushing



the dirt from her knees, the child flashed a happy smile at the world in general and her father in particular. The little super-woman had won her first diplomatic battle.

Tzu Hsi—that was the name she went by, though she possessed eight perfectly good, if unpronounceable, other names. I won't burden you with those others, for her rise to super-womanhood was so rapid that the eight other names do not signify in her upward progress, any more than eight bits of ribbon tied on a swiftly ascending kite.

The twelve-year-old child became one of the many slaves in a viceregal household, and the family "honor" was saved!

Tzu Hsi had no mind to remain a slave, however; she had other plans. Her keen little brain was full of plots and schemes.

Her first move was to please her master and his favorite wife. She made herself absolutely necessary to them both. She tried in every way to curry favor with them. For instance, one day she overheard the viceroy talking enviously of a marvelous embroidered coat he had seen worn at a banquet. Tzu Hsi said nothing, but listened intently, straining her two pretty ears, until he had described the color and embroidery minutely. Then she set to work to make a coat exactly like it in every detail. Each stitch was worked by her own hand, as her sore little fingers proved.

Bobbing and dimpling, and with much show of white teeth, she presented her gift to the viceroy.

"You said you wished for an embroidered coat, O beloved of Heaven," she said. "Here is that so poor and ill-conditioned coat, made for your noble shoulders by my stupid and most clumsy fingers!"

The viceroy was delighted beyond words, and by way of reward, offered her any gift she would have. She re-

fused any payment—in great humility, but with much firmness.

"What, then, will you have, you funny little creature?" asked the viceroy.

"May it please your nobleness to let me learn to read?" was the meek request.

Her master exclaimed wonderingly: "You talk of learning to read! No woman is clever enough to learn the Chinese alphabet!"

But the super-woman who was one day to rule four hundred million people could not be stopped by any such argument. She kept at it, and finally won her point. She not only learned to read, but speedily acquired an education few women of enlightened countries could boast. Her master, who had no children, waxed so proud of her that he elevated her from a slave to the post of adopted daughter.

At fifteen she had grown to be extremely beautiful, according to Chinese standards. Accomplished, charming in manner, she was a marvel of tact and diplomacy. She easily took rank as one of the cleverest, most desirable young girls in the realm.

The first victim of her super-woman charm was her master, the viceroy, who gradually became her slave. The viceroy's wife, who had loved Tzu Hsi as an own daughter, grew bitterly jealous. Despite Tzu Hsi's tact, there were family quarrels—plenty of them. Something must be done; that was evident.

There came a solution of the problem from a totally unexpected quarter—unexpected, that is, to all but the crafty little super-woman, whose eyes even then looked far, far ahead.

The young emperor, Hsien-feng, sent out an edict, summoning to the palace six hundred girls of pure Manchu birth. From these six hundred, ten were to be chosen as subsidiary wives for the emperor's harem.

Tzu Hsi resolved to be one of the ten.

It was a wrench for the viceroy to part with her, but it had to be done, so he made the best of it and sent her off in style. His wife was so happy at the prospect of losing the girl that she decked her out in the prettiest clothes at hand, thereby making her doubly attractive—and incidentally less likely to be returned.

In a flutter of excitement, the sixteen-year-old damsel set off on her journey to the imperial court.

While she was crossing the Hun-Ho River, her litter upset and she fell into the water. A young sailor leaped gallantly to the rescue and brought her ashore in his arms. With many protestations of gratitude, the girl thanked her preserver. Taking a ring from her finger, she gave it to the youth. She looked long into his eyes, then said:

"I shall not forget you. You'll see!"

And she did not forget. Ever she kept an eye on his progress and helped it along. When Tzu Hsi became ruler of China, she appointed this rescuer of hers chief adviser. In this capacity, he made history on his own account. His name was Li Hung Chang. It was his first meeting with the superwoman whose reign he was destined to adorn. Had he let her drown, his chance of a career would probably have drowned with her.

Leaving Li Hung Chang staring—first at her, and then at his ring—Tzu Hsi hastily changed into other garments. Luckily her foster mother had provided her with a trousseau befitting a nobleman's daughter; so, in spite of her involuntary bath, she was able to present herself before the appraising eyes of the reigning dowager empress immaculate from tip to toe.

For all the conjugal candidates were obliged to pass in review before this old aristocrat. It was she, and not the emperor, who did the choosing. Every

girl strove desperately to make a favorable impression on her prospective mother-in-law. For it is the mothers-in-law who count in China. Perhaps the reason they are so autocratic, and so hard on the girls their sons marry, is because they all remember their own downtrodden youth and resolve to get even. In China, it is age, not youth, that "must have its fling."

From six hundred competitors, Tzu Hsi was chosen among the ten lucky ones, and of the ten she was given the rank of fifth subsidiary wife by the old empress.

It was a big leap—that from slave girl to one of the highest women in the land, but Tzu Hsi was more than equal to it. She set herself to charm the emperor; and when she curled herself up beside him and strummed the strings of her samisen, singing a funny little song, he was sublimely happy. She never bothered him with petty jealousies, as did most of his other wives. Oh, she was wily, was Tzu Hsi.

It was not long before she attained such influence over her husband that he advanced her to "fourth wife." That was all right as far as it went, thought the youthful adventuress, but, in the language of the soldiers, she always kept her "eyes front." As soon as her feet felt solid ground beneath them, she invariably took a step forward.

So presently she lured the emperor into making her "third wife," instead of fourth. After that it was easy enough—for a superwoman like Tzu Hsi—to persuade him to make her one of his two chief wives.

Little by little, the emperor grew to leave all matters of statesmanship in her hands. Her superior intellect relieved his dull brain of every perplexity. Her ambition and diplomacy made a combination that untwisted every knotty problem as if by magic.

With marvelous skill, the ex-slave

girl grasped the tangled skein of Oriental politics and ruled with a brilliancy and a firmness almost unequaled in Eastern annals.

Added to this, she bore her husband a son and heir, which cemented her supremacy over the other "principal wife."

In the midst of the maelstrom of political and domestic affairs, Tzu Hsi did not forget to pay flattering attention to the old empress. She was not only favorite wife; she made herself favorite daughter-in-law—which, God knows, is an achievement, even for a super-woman! She also treated the lesser wives with great consideration and never presumed in any way. She was resolved to have no enemies. In other words, prosperity did not cause her to lose her head. It was always "eyes front," as I said. Her wagon was hitched to a star, but she was wise enough to see that the wagon was kept right side up.

She made a conquest of all the imperial family. The nobles of the court and all the great men of the empire passed under her sway. Through her fascinations each and every one of them became the creature of her will—pawns in the shrewd game she played for undisputed supremacy.

Occasionally she collided with other master minds, but in the mighty contest for the emperor's favor, it was, as ever, a survival of the fittest—and hers was invariably the fittest.

There was a brief time when Tzu Hsi and her party seemed to be losing ground with the emperor. Strange to say, at this critical moment he died, quite suddenly, of a chill. The mystery of his death was not explained.

A rival party, led by the Prince of Ei, tried to seize control. Ei sought to make himself regent. But Tzu Hsi was too clever for him. Rushing to her nursery, she grabbed up her four-year-old son and put him on the throne.

The baby—precocious child!—"issued an edict," making his mother and the former emperor's other "principal wife" regents during his minority.

The Prince of Ei and another nobleman were courteously allowed to kill themselves, while a third, Shu-shun, had his head cut off by the common executioner, like a mere nobody.

The old empress had long since been gathered to her ancestors, so Tzu Hsi had now only her little son and the other wife to reckon with. The two women were called "Empress of the Western Palace" and "Empress of the Eastern Palace," respectively.

Tzu Hsi's uncanny judgment of people and events gave her absolute power. It was impossible to get the better of her. A plot was formed to kill her, but the tiger super-woman tracked it to earth and pounced upon its perpetrators. The plotters died with no apparent bother at all to themselves or their relatives.

Very soon, Tzu Hsi's keen mind told her that her half-imbecile son would be no credit to her. Both he and the "other wife" loomed up as excess baggage on the ship of state. Before long, the small Son of Heaven "mounted the dragon"—which is the way Chinese children are supposed to be transported to the next world—"and became a guest on high."

The dragon presumably made a return trip, for the "other wife" traveled the same road almost immediately.

Tzu Hsi drew a long breath and looked about her. At last she stood alone—on the very top of the hill. She was sole regent of China. The Eastern world was at her feet. Here and there, among the crowd, she saw the face of an objector. One stroke of her vermilion pen caused him to disappear—never to return. The empress never explained her acts. Crafty, cruel, overbearing, she was a past mistress of duplicity. From the time she

was twenty-six until her death, she ruled China absolutely.

She was the Catherine of the Orient, but, like Queen Elizabeth, she was keen enough to surround herself with none but the wisest advisers. She had previously married her niece, Yehonala, to one of the former emperor's relatives. Their son, Kwang-hsii, she placed on the Chinese throne, announcing that her husband had secretly adopted this nephew of hers as his own son and that the child was therefore lawful emperor. She proceeded to crown him, and to act as regent during his long minority. She saw to it that Kwang-hsii's education and amusements should be along lines that would wreck him, mentally and physically, and make him a doddering figurehead, the dupe of his powerful aunt.

So, even when the lad came of age, she kept right on ruling in his name.

Once Kwang-hsii made a feeble effort to grasp the reins of government for himself. But Tzu Hsi promptly outwitted him, and from then on kept him practically a prisoner and entirely subject to her will.

The empress now remembered Li Hung Chang. He had not ceased to adore her memory and to follow her fortunes from afar. She sought him out and made him her chief adviser. This was only another proof of her unerring wisdom.

Later on, she added his protégé, Yuan Shi-Kai, to the inner circle. These two men, and Prince Ching, helped her run her foreign policies. All of them regarded her as a goddess and obeyed the slightest wave of her unbelievably long-nailed little finger. Advancing years never dimmed her charm to those around her.

From time to time, revolts against her despotism were started, only to be mercilessly crushed, as were the people who started them. It was not necessary to put prisoners to trial. One

word from the empress was as good as a full court martial.

Reformers sought to bring China more in touch with the outer world. The empress, who had a violent hatred for all foreigners and all things Occidental, wasted no time in diplomacy. She had more than twenty of these reformers put to death. In the supposedly "enlightened twentieth century," she controlled her peoples' lives and actions as completely as ever did a tyrant of the Middle Ages.

She kept her empire in fairly good standing among the nations of the world, until the Chino-Japanese war revealed Chinese weakness. Then even the empress was powerless to prevent the inroads on her territory. It was a critical time in her country's history. It shook China's prestige, but not its ruler's boundless power.

The quelling of the Boxer Rebellion was another humiliation to the people, but not necessarily to the empress. There are few who do not believe that she secretly instigated and fostered this uprising that threatened the peace of the whole world, endangered the lives of thousands of foreigners, and brought the allied armies of civilization in haste to Peking.

She never scrupled over the means to an end. In her heart she believed in China for the Chinese. That was the germ of the reactionary Boxer creed.

This organization began life as a small secret society. Under the empress' brilliant private guidance, it swept over all China. A tremendous Boxer army gathered. "Down with the foreign devils!" was the slogan on their flags. They occupied the region all around Peking and besieged the foreign section of the city.

Allied warships—American among them—landed troops and rushed them toward Peking. This mixed allied army cut its way, inch by inch, through

the solid mass of Boxers. The Americans, as is their habit, were in the forefront of battle. It was there, for a fortnight, that the allied army met and conquered a bigger army than its own. Finally the allies reached Peking and lifted the siege. Then they invaded the "Hidden City," the holy of holies, where no foreigner was ever supposed to set foot, and in the center of which, like a huge spider in the midst of her web, sat the empress, masklike of face, her tiger claws sheathed. At the sacrilege of this invasion, no less than six hundred nobles of high rank committed suicide.

The royal palace was captured. Loot was carted away. The victors dictated their terms to the empress. She was wise enough to know when her country had had enough. Keeping the nations of Europe at bay with one hand, she held China together with the other. She accomplished this huge task with ruin staring her in the face. No one but a super-woman could have done it.

Always increasingly wise, she grew with the times, and realized at last that China's only hope was in being modernized. She was a great patriot, and having once made up her mind to Western reforms, she bent all her energies to see that they were put in force. She did not spare herself, but toiled like a galley slave for her beloved country's good.

She resolved to stamp out the opium curse—though she used the drug occasionally herself—and forbade its manufacture or use in any shape.

Another of her reforms was the "unbound foot." For centuries, little Chinese girls had suffered tortures with their bandaged feet; often they died from their sufferings. It was not that the parents were heartless. They knew no better. Men would not take a girl for wife who had a foot longer than four inches. If a maiden was to win a husband, her only chance was to sub-

mit to the torture of the bound foot. The empress changed all this. The women of China should worship her for that reason, if for no other.

The next reform was to send her young men to the schools and colleges of Europe and America, and to copy Western methods as much as possible in the schools of China.

"Perhaps," said Emile Bard, "she felt that, after all, there was a higher and better civilization than that which China has attained in her wall-environed career of centuries." Whether or not she really believed in the new policy, she was wise enough to know that it had to come. Therefore, she made the best of it, and seemed to welcome the newest ideas with open arms. Perhaps, in this, she was like the mother who ordered her little son to sit down. When the child paid no attention, she said:

"Well, then, *stand up!* I will be minded!"

One old-fogy contemporary wrote of her in despair thus:

"How will she be able to justify her conduct to her imperial ancestors and all her loyal people?"

Evidently he did not move with the times, as did she.

The empress started the Red Cross subscription in China with one thousand taels.

Had she lived longer, doubtless she would have continued to astonish the world. But in 1908 she died—just one day after Kwang-hsii. Overpraised by her admirers, overmagnified by her enemies, she yet stands for what she was—one of the most amazing women the world has ever known or will know. Looking back over her life, one marvels that she was able to hold her realm together in spite of the fearfully hard knocks that beat about its weakened sides. Only her firm, energetic grasp could so have held it.

In the twilight of her life, her mental and moral horizon continually broadened. It is not so with lesser personalities. They wither up into second childhood when old age comes on. At seventy-four, the dowager empress was greater than ever. In a country where women were despised as mere beasts of burden, she, in herself, raised womanhood's standard to an immeasurable height. She defied the whole world.

Her brilliant super-woman charm

had turned the heads of all men with whom she came in contact and raised her from the gutter to a throne. Her matchless diplomacy kept her there, after her charm had fled.

Such is the story of this strange old woman.

Whether she ever really loved any one, I do not know. Perhaps she preferred to accept love rather than to give it.

Perhaps that was part of her success secret. Perhaps not.

Next Month: Giulia Grisi



## I, WHO LAUGHED MY YOUTH AWAY

I WHO laughed my youth away  
 And blew bubbles to the sky,  
 Thin as air and frail as fire,  
 Opals, pearls of such desire  
 As a saint could but admire;  
 Now as azure as a sigh,  
 Then with passion all aglow—  
 Golden, crimson, purple, gray  
 Moods and moments of a day—  
 Have been gay,  
 Yea,  
 As they,  
 Sailing high,  
 Sinking low;  
 Even so  
 I,  
 Pierrot,  
 Walking Paris in a trance,  
 With my weary feet in France  
 And my heart in Bergamo,  
 Loved—and lost my laughing way,

*I, of course, have never had  
 Any great amount of gold  
 Other than my bubbles hold.  
 Love? I have no loving plan  
 As a guide to beast or man,  
 Being neither good nor bad,  
 Just a sort of sorry lad.*

WILLIAM GRIFFITH.





# Heyday o' the Blood

By Elizabeth Burgess Hughes

THE lure of that North African land is as potent as a drug—drowsy, poisonous, and tenacious. It is a country of sin and forgetfulness, of dreams and drunken laughter and slow, bitter tears in the night. In the great, hot solitude, men drift gradually from old customs and ideals. The sun covers them like a vast inverted oven, white-hot. It scorches away resistance. The eternal thump-thumping of tom-toms gets into the blood, sets it stirring to the animal pulses of life, and hands men over to wine and lust.

What wonder that these men from overseas are sometimes driven to desperation? Here, among this human driftwood that has cast temporary anchor and the natives who live only for the day, anything is possible. Sea—and a burning sun—sands—and silence.

It was six o'clock in the *Café d'Apolon*. This café is the rendezvous of such society as the city of Algiers boasts. Here come sheiks from the desert's great tents, caids from the settlements, and all that army of Arabian officialdom that takes its afternoon *apéritif*. Some of them wear the ribbon or button of the Legion of Honor. Grim, taciturn, quiet men these, who think a great deal and say very little. Outside, the first cooling that comes on after a brassy, burning day had spread over the streets; the wonderful rosy-mauve twilight was coming on. In the café, behind palm trees in green-painted tubs, a native sat strumming on a *touiba*. The hum of voices, punctuated

now and then by the high-pitched laughter of the women accompanying some of the men in uniform, made a drowsy, pleasant sound like many bees in clover.

Algiers is the most wonderful mingling of the exotic and the conventional—things Arab and European—in the world. And it is beautifully picturesque at any hour of the day. In the morning, it is all a white dazzle; in the evening, a rosy-mauve haze lies over everything, with the Djurjura shutting off the shore line from the Sahara to the south. At twilight, a thousand twinkling lights spring out from the Kasba on the height, from Mustapha, from the terrace boulevard flanking the port, from the ships in the harbor. From the great lighthouse at Cap Matifou flashes forth the most brilliant light of all. The thoroughfares—Bab-el-Oued, La Kasba, Bab-Agoum—are crowded; their background is the gleaming walls of the arcaded terraces of the town, the turrets and towers, and back even of these the rolling, olive-clad hills of the Sahel. The passing throng—English, French, Americans, turbaned Turks, Jews, Moors, and Arabs clad in all the rainbow colors of their savagery—is a living kaleidoscope. On every hand are interesting native types—a date seller who looks like the portraits of Abd-el-Kader; a butcher dozing behind a stall, waving a palm leaf to keep away the flies; a peanut vender under his green shade; a grinning bootblack with his eternal "*Cire, m'sieu'!*" And over all, the stretching, cloudless sky; beneath it the rest-

less, still bluer Mediterranean; and everywhere the odors of sea salt, oranges, and *bitume*.

Here is camped that regiment of soldiers known in France as the "Légion Etrangère," composed of men of every nationality who have been allowed to enlist without credentials of any kind; and it is no secret that most of them are fugitives from the law. Almost every member carries an assumed name. But no questions are ever asked. They simply fight. And no regiment ever fought more desperately and gloriously for France than these out-cast *Légionnaires*.

In the Café d'Apollon, Everard Gershom, who a month ago had been admitted to the "Regiment of Strangers" on his mere affirmative to the question, "Will you fight?" moved hesitatingly through the crowd till he reached a small table set beside an open window. An Arab waiter in a creamy-white burnoose indicated that the table was reserved. He muttered disappointedly and moved over nearer the palm trees, where the native with his *touiba* was making queer, monotonous music.

Gershom's gray eyes had an eager wistfulness that belied the bitter curve of his mouth. He looked rather lonely and out of place in the jostling, busy café. He was quietly middle-aged, rather stockily built, with hair graying at the temples, but very thick and vital looking. One could fancy him an easy-going country doctor or merchant better than a member of the nameless regiment. The waiter brought him wines, and then left him to usher some newcomers to their places—at the table by the window for which he had instinctively headed. They were two rather elderly men, a still more elderly woman, and a charming girl—one of the ice-blond, spectacular beauties who sometimes emerge, astonishingly enough, from sedate English parsonages. Evidently one of the elderly men, a clergy-

man from his dress, was her father or a close relative, for she had a pretty air of deferring to him, touching him lightly now and then, like a capricious child. Gershom looked at her in frank admiration; she was so palely blond, like a tall Ascension lily. He wondered what they were doing here.

Suddenly some one near him began to sing, in a rollicking tenor voice, and Gershom, closing his eyes, was abruptly back in New York. Something in the lilting tones seemed familiar, though the song was not. But the swing of it was the ragtime of Broadway.

And then he saw the singer.

He was standing on a chair, tipsily laughing while he sang, his wineglass describing circles in the air with every word. He was patently American, with that bright Occidental gayety and sympathetic appeal that one sees nowhere else save in Frenchmen; and though evidently he was not the usual seasoned fighter, he had been "decorated." The medal hung conspicuously on his chest. In spite of the fact that he must have been forty-five or more, the charm of youth was in his gay dark eyes, smooth, fair hair, and clean-cut, boyish mouth; one of those magnetic personalities that instinctively command attention.

Afterward it struck Gershom as a bit ironical that the thing which impressed him first, after the shock of recognition, was that the eyes of the blond young Englishwoman were fastened on the singer half in astonishment, half in admiration.

Gershom had come almost across the world to avoid this man, whom he had once tried to kill, and here in the sleepy yellow lands, very far removed from Broadway's jazz delirium, he had suddenly encountered his Nemesis. In spite of himself, his mind crept back to the brink of that black abyss of memory. He had almost forgotten—or told himself that he had forgotten. But over there in the flare of the light,

swinging his wineglass as lightheartedly as if no tragedy whatever lay behind him, stood Haven Lenlys. It was still heyday o' the blood with him. It turned Gershom cold to recall Edith's face when Lenlys sang, for he had been singing five years ago, too—debonair things she had loved. There had been times when Gershom had told himself that he had rather have her living—living with Lenlys—than lying back there so quietly under an evergreen tree in her small-town grave, she who had loved the pulse of the world. What he had done was one of the horrors that send men into the Legion of Strangers. He had hoped, by plunging into war, to be relieved of memory. And here, at the very threshold of his new life, appeared the central figure of that five-year-old tragedy, to remind him that there was no getting away from it.

But he sat very quietly in his corner, and except that his pallor was striking against the bronzed faces about him, there was nothing to differentiate him from the others. His heart gradually stopped pounding and became almost regular. A sort of stupor had followed that first blazing instant of passion.

Of course Lenlys had not seen him. Gershom wondered grimly just what he would do when he did see. There was a certain pulseless excitement in waiting for the moment of recognition. And again Gershom thought of Edith, forever done with the fitful fever of love.

But Lenlys got down from his chair without seeing the quiet, waiting figure in the corner, and in a moment was one of a group of laughing, bantering Europeans, officers most of them, jabbering in French, English, and Italian. You would have thought, to look at him, that he had never had a moment of regret or disillusionment. Gershom clenched his hands so tightly under the table that the nails cut. He wondered if many men could so easily forget.

The coffee was served by one of the

native women, a dancer—a bewildering figure even in the cosmopolitan D'Apollon. She was young and lithe and smiling. The rice powder and the *maquillage* were thick on her cheeks; her long black eyes shone; her well-shaped head was wound with a massive *coiffe* of raven-black hair. She was clad in a corsage of gold-embroidered velvet, and her silk *pantalon* was wide and thick enough to have been a skirt. Her wrists and ankles were bound with bracelets which jangled as she moved; her finger tips and toes were dyed red with henna. Evidently she could speak fairly good French, for she jested with the men, as she moved among them, in that tongue that is most revered in Algeria. After the coffee had been served, she danced, in a little open space between the tables, to the accompaniment of a native instrument.

Gershom, absorbed by his bitter memories, scarcely noticed that the girl's black eyes wandered oftenest in his direction. Presently she came and stood beside him, her bracelets tinkling with her lazy, graceful movements.

"Monsieur is lonely?" she questioned him softly, under pretense of serving his coffee.

He looked up quickly, amazed that he had been spoken to in English; but his lip curled a trifle contemptuously.

"Isn't everybody lonely? Even you, mademoiselle, may be lonely—at times."

"Ah, but, monsieur, always! My heart is forever of an ache. But the dancing helps. Monsieur should forget, let himself go, dance and be merry——"

"For to-morrow we die," he finished laconically. "But, even so, life holds surprises. Think of finding in the D'Apollon an Arab dancer who speaks perfectly good English! But perhaps you *aren't* Arab, after all?"

But the black, heavy-lidded eyes met his mockery with a tranquil smile.

"Pardon, monsieur, I am Arab—partly. My mother was French. I myself am a mixture of Paris and the desert. Adieu, monsieur. Perhaps we shall meet again."

She drifted away, with the limpid, effortless movements of the born dancer, and presently he saw her jesting carelessly among the officers.

His passionate flare of a moment ago having died as abruptly as it had come, he felt nervous and tired, but he sat sipping his wine with that impenetrable composure that is the most effective mask of all. On the other side of the room, Lenlys was telling a joke—one of the double-edged ones in which he excelled, driving home the point with a little curved smile and the sparkling, questioning eyes of a *débutante*. Oh, he was clever, was Lenlys!

Presently the laughing group broke up, separated, and Lenlys, accompanied by a young giant in khaki, moved straight toward him, on the way to the door. There was an instant of breathless suspense as Gershom waited, wine-glass halfway to his lips.

The eyes of the two men met—in Gershom's a dark little flame, burning far back; in Lenlys'—what? Evidently the man had remarkable self-control. For the merest fraction of a second, his look wavered and he half halted; then immediately he was again his smiling, insouciant self. He bowed gravely, passed on.

Gershom sat stock-still in his chair, the wineglass still poised. Almost subconsciously he perceived that the young Englishwoman, who had risen and was drawing on her wrap, still followed Lenlys with her eyes. All women's eyes followed Lenlys. He remembered how Edith—

The place was suddenly too stifling for comfort, and, slamming down his glass, he rose and hurried out. He found himself at once in the streets of *la belle Algérie*—that wonderful Afri-

can-Mediterranean setting for love and tragedy. The ragged eucalyptus trees threw gnarled shadows on the stone pavements along which he walked rapidly, possessed of only one idea—to get away from the glaring asmosphere of the café, with its chattering, careless tongues. His steps presently led him without intention—for he was walking with no aim or goal—into the narrow, shut-in streets that huddle about the grim walls of the hilltop Kasba. High above, beyond the street of stairs, set in whitewashed walls were great iron-studded doors and grilled windows. Below he could see the mosques, the narrow *ruelles* with their overhanging porches, the *maisons à terrasse*; but, looking back at those barred windows, he recalled the "Arab women of the walls," and thought by very force of contrast of the gay, jesting dancer in the Café d'Apollon. Was there really Arab blood in her veins? What brilliant eyes she had, smiling at him between her loops of raven hair! Yet how infinitely weary they had been in the instant when she had said that her heart was "forever of an ache!"

A *voiture publique* came clattering along the stones, waking echoes in the huge, still night. The driver had a rope-wound turban on his head, a flowing, entangling burnoose wrapped his body, and he carried a five-yard whip. Within the vehicle sat a huddled figure shrouded in a long, dark cloak. The moonlight made everything as plain as day, so that Gershom, outlined against the platane trees, must have been easily recognized. The driver, at an exclamation from his "fare," suddenly stopped short, and the darkly wrapped figure leaned out.

"Monsieur!"

Concealing his astonishment, he moved nearer—and looked into the brilliant black eyes of the café dancer. The hood of her cloak covered her hair, but he saw that her face, with most of

the make-up removed, was less Algerian than he had supposed, and far more seductive. Her small red mouth laughed at him, lured him.

"Oh, monsieur, it is not a night on which to be lonely! See—the moon laughs, and there are hundreds of lovers under the stars! Algeria was made for love, not loneliness." Her voice was liquidly sweet, with a husky thrill in it.

Beyond the purple blotches where the shadows lay deep, rose the impenetrable, swathing silence of the Orient. Somewhere down there in the twinkling town Lenlys went on his gay, light-hearted way. He, Gershom, alone was suffering because of what had been. Must he go back to-night to his lonely hotel room and stare all night into eternity past the buginvillea vine that draped the dark square of his window? Sleep would be out of the question.

"I am a wayfarer, mademoiselle, and love does not come to the wanderer," he said bitterly.

"Ah, but that is not true! It is the bird of passage that knows many kinds of love in many lands. It is of a wisdom, monsieur, to find happiness where one can. To-day's roses may die while one awaits temerity to pluck them."

Cynical where women were concerned, Gershom was conscious of an unwonted thrill as the exquisite voice enveloped him like a perfume. Lord, but he needed a woman's gay raillery and sympathetic tenderness to-night!

"You are—offering yourself, mademoiselle, in the rôle of comforter?"

"Exactly. Monsieur accepts?"

"With pleasure," and he climbed in beside her with scarcely a qualm of apprehension or wonder as to what might be in store for him. Members of the Foreign Legion, that mixed crew of nation builders propagated by the French military authorities, are apt to be a trifle reckless in their adventures,

whether they be of the trench or the boudoir.

They went clattering over the stones without speaking. But presently into the silence came the low, rippling voice:

"Monsieur, my name is Aicha. It means 'life.' And this," as they drew up before an unlighted house with whitewashed walls and barred windows blossoming with dark-red roses, "is my *retraite*. Will monsieur enter?"

She dismissed the automatonlike driver and led the way into a big hallway along which the moonlight, filtering through the windows, lay in a checkered design. She passed on, crossing another threshold before switching on the lights. And then, to his amazement, Gershom found himself surrounded by an un-Arab, almost Romanesque luxury. The great room, with its Flemish tapestries and ancient, heavily carved chairs and tables, its blue Venetian lanterns through which the light dropped to silken rugs, copper vessels, and tall floor vases in clear relief against the Cordova leather of the walls, its few exquisitely chosen paintings, its mass of *chinoiserie*s, its deep, great divans covered with rare rugs and nests of pillows in queer, exotic colors, struck him as the most beautifully inconsistent thing possible. Aicha, smiling, dropped her lithe body into one of the big tapestry-covered chairs. She was as contradictory in this setting as she was exquisite.

"Sit down, please, and I will give you cigarettes and wine. You are wondering? Perhaps I will explain—later. Just now, be at peace, monsieur, and forget to be lonely."

With one deft movement, she had lowered the lights to a pale glow that filled the room like dimly lit moonflowers. The vases were heavy with the same red roses he had seen at the windows. Their heady, tropical odor filled the place, made him drowsy. At his elbow was a painted tray containing

wine and cigarettes. He lit one of the little monogrammed cigarettes, enjoying the very smell of the rich smoke that rose, drifting lazily over Aicha's head.

She nodded.

"That is right, my friend. You are feeling better already, is it not so? And now—you will excuse me for a moment?"

She smiled at him, and with her noiseless, smooth step passed between the portières into the room beyond, leaving him with the roses and the sultry night.

He could not have told how long she had been gone, but he did not rouse when the portières again parted. And when she spoke and he looked at her, he was too bewildered to answer. In fact, but for the liquid voice, he would not have known it was she.

The Arab dancer had disappeared. This woman was Paris incarnate—blond, save for the bright dark eyes, her graceful figure wrapped in satiny, swan's-down-edged negligée that was the last word in alluring, sophisticated dishabille. A rope of perfectly matched pearls hung to her knees. Her fair, curling hair was caught back from her face in an intricate coil at the back; a narrow silver ribbon was filleted across her brows. She looked taller, too—an utterly different type of woman.

"Well, monsieur? You are wondering more than ever? So? Very well. When you wish, I will tell you why I brought you here to-night."

Already the languor of the night, the cool, dim lights, and the odor of musk had got into his blood. But he was too literal not to be curious. She had seated herself on one of the divans, still smiling at him. Her smile affected him much as her wine had done. She was electric; he thought he had never seen a more alluring woman. And suddenly, for the second time in his life, he was acutely conscious of the smoldering depths in his own soul. The

night and the perfume of musk and roses—and this woman, coupled with his loneliness, were almost maddening.

"I knew you weren't an Arab, there in the D'Apollon!" he exclaimed abruptly. "You don't belong here, so why——"

"I think I do belong, in a way. You see, my mother was a lovely, bored tourist from France, who became infatuated with"—she laughed rather grimly—"a good-looking dragoman. They got her away before any damage had been done, so they thought." She shrugged and tapped her breast significantly. "She used to talk to me of Algeria. The dream was with her till she died. She married a steady, unimaginative bourgeois who needed money, and he was always kind to me, but the poetry of *la belle Algérie* was in my blood. So when she died, and my plodding stepfather married again, I ran away. I was sixteen. I went on the stage. I have rather an unusual voice, so perhaps I succeeded more easily than most women. My real name is Cyprienne, but my mother used to call me Aicha, because it meant 'life,' and all the real life she'd ever known had been a few purple nights in Tugurt, the gateway to the Sahara.

"I went to your America, monsieur. As Cyprienne Silvain, I made something of a 'hit'—is it that one says?—in your big, soulless New York——"

"Cyprienne Silvain! Why—I remember when the papers were full of her singing and dancing! I even saw her for a few minutes one night after a dinner party, just as her act was closing. I recall her as a slim sprite in— in very nearly nothing, with laurel leaves on her curled yellow hair——"

"Exactly, monsieur. That was I. And it was in New York that I met Mr. Lenlys."

As if galvanized into astonishment, Gershom came to his feet. She put out one small hand and touched him.



"Patience, monsieur. Sit down. There is no need to get upset. I will tell you about it. You see, Mr. Haven Lenlys was what you call a man-about-town——"

"And a blackguard and a *débauché*!" he cut in violently.

"Exactly, monsieur. A charming good-for-nothing who lives by his wits. But I loved him. I think every woman who loves him finds ever after something lacking in other men. Perhaps it is his gay good humor; perhaps his very irresponsibleness. At any rate, he gets a very terrible hold on the heart of a woman."

Did he not know? Edith had died frantically in love with him.

"He made extravagant love to me—made me believe I was his heart's desire, his life's dream. I adored him. I gave him my devotion—myself—all the tremendous passion of which I was capable, all the mother love that had lain dormant within me, all the fire and sweetness and tenderness of my soul. Then—I found out. There were a dozen others. Chief among them was—pardon me, monsieur—your wife."

He made no sign that he had heard, —only stared unseeingly through the window, with its drapery of dull-red roses.

"When you found them together and shot them both"—she cowered for an instant, her face hidden in her hands, shuddering nervously—"killing the woman and only wounding the man—well, you know, my friend, the papers were full of it. You left him for dead—you had meant to kill him—and only 'the unwritten law' saved you. I sat in court and watched your face once during the trial. I know just how you felt. I wanted to kill him, too."

"Then the war came, and Mr. Lenlys, who was always restless and glad of adventure, was called to the colors. He was injured in the Argonne and sent to a hospital for a time. On his

recovery, he was granted a few months' leave. Then something—I don't know just what, but I shall find out in time—brought him to Algiers. He is with a party of friends. You see, I had meanwhile returned to France and kept in close touch with him, though he didn't know it, and wouldn't have been in the least interested if he had known. Nothing is so thoroughly dead with him as a dead love. When he left France, I followed him. Through an acquaintance, I became a dancer at the D'Apolon, where the military men go. He has looked straight into my eyes and never recognized me!

"This house belongs to an Italian \*tragedienne who is now in France. I leased it for a time, because I am luxurious and must have an interesting environment. But when he moves on, I shall go, too."

"To-night when I saw you there, monsieur, my heart almost stopped. I knew you at once, and I knew, too, that you had come for the same reason that I have come here."

"And that is——"

"*Revenge!*"

To his own amazement, he found himself laughing harshly.

"I assure you, mademoiselle, I had no such intentions. I came to—forget. I didn't know Lenlys was here. Our meeting to-night was wholly accidental. I am not melodramatic by nature. I attempted revenge once—and failed. For his sake, I killed my wife—the thing I loved best on earth—and he, who would have broken her heart, goes scot free! Oh, I know! The diabolical injustice of things! God knows why I have not gone mad!"

"But now—now is your chance! That is why I asked you to come here to-night. To-night you and I may plan a revenge so clever, so bitterly ingenious, so devilishly cruel, that no one mind alone could conceive it. Torture him through insane weeks, threaten him

with daily death, mock him—"What matter what form it takes? Look, monsieur!" Rising, she took his hand and led him to a panel in the wall. In response to a touch, it opened, and they peered down innumerable narrow stairs.

"Down there, in the pitch blackness, a man once strapped his wife against the wall and let her starve to death while the rats gnawed her delicate limbs," she said matter-of-factly. "Melodrama? The Orient's full of it. Life and love and death and revenge—they're all woven of the same pattern." Her face showed strained and bitter in the moonflower light. "You will help me, monsieur?"

A tense stillness filled the place, pressed, throbbing, against his temples. Never had he dreamed that fate could be so kind, could play so completely into his hands. Off here near the desert, where the sirocco blew from the south on the African coast and the brassy sky addled the brain, anything might happen. No one would ever know. Aided by the hellish fury of this woman scorned, he could adequately revenge Edith's death. *No one would know!*

It seemed a century, but it was really only a moment before he spoke:

"I will help you."

After that, there were discussions of plans and leisurely talk over the wines and cigarettes. Taut with excitement, they smoked endless cigarettes while they plotted, all languor gone. And going hotelward along the rocky, narrow streets, Gershom perceived that the inertia of years had fallen from him. He was alive, vital, thrilling with a new sense of power. This man who had broken up his home and taken Edith from him, in the most horrible manner possible, should be made to suffer as others had suffered for him. There were few chances of discovery. Once immured in that dungeon of rats and

darkness, Lenlys would never be able to reach his world, to tell what had happened. That part of Algeria which knew him would suppose that he had gone back to France, and France would suppose him still in Algiers.

That night, for the first time in five years, Gershom slept soundly, nor did he once wake to stare through the tendrils of the buginillæa vine into the black, mocking night.

The week passed, and every night Aicha danced in the Café d'Apollon, light as sea foam, apparently bubbling over with the joy of life, swathed in a rainbow beauty of coloring, her dark eyes gleaming black under the shining inky wig, and surrounded by her heavy make-up. He saw Lenlys, who came in every afternoon with his fellow officers for *apéritif*, throw her a jesting compliment now and then, and she always answered him merrily, in a voice quite unlike her own, as silvery and tinkling as the bracelets on her ankles. And every night Gershom went to the whitewashed house of the Roman tragedienne who had sought rest and seclusion on the edge of the desert, and smoked endless cigarettes with Aicha while she talked to him and put the fire of the devil in his soul. Revenge had become an obsession.

Gershom observed that the tall English girl now walked in the garden with Lenlys and dined at his table. They were constantly together. Her infatuation seemed obvious—much as Edith's had been. But always she seemed to look at him with just a shade of reserve that was like a filmy curtain drawn before a lighted window. Gershom understood that—it was the influence of the clergyman father, who was not willing to receive unquestioningly an American stranger as an intimate of his party.

During that week Gershom, aided by Aicha, availed himself of all the information regarding Lenlys that was nec-

essary to the fulfilment of their plans. Evidently Lenlys himself considered everything in his past a sealed book. In his soul there must have been a certain debonaire courage, for he showed no fear of Gershom—did not, indeed, even avoid him. Gershom knew that he was always panoplied with the feeling of his own inestimable importance; he believed that to him the gods were always kind and that he bore a charmed life. Moreover, like so many men of his type, he was a fatalist. When the two men met, Lenlys always bowed gravely and passed on, quite unruffled, while Gershom was left with a dry mouth and a plunging pulse.

On the first night of the week following, an inkling of the reason for Lenlys' presence in Algiers reached him. He was in the smoking room of one of the hotels, and Lenlys was absent. But several of his "party of friends" were gossiping together near by.

"Funny thing, Lenlys' taking that sudden notion to spend his leave in Algiers, don't you think? There he was, mooning about all day, and suddenly, when Hardezon mentioned this Algerian trip, he exclaimed: 'By Jove, Hardy, take me along, too! I haven't had half enough adventure yet.' What did he mean, adventure—a man just out of the trenches?"

"Can't imagine—but I remember that he said, in a joking way, that there was some one in Algiers who wanted to see him. A woman, ten to one."

"Very probably," agreed the other with an insinuating wink; and then, apparently because they seemed to be approaching delicate ground, the subject was dropped.

A few minutes afterward, when Gershom went into the garden for a breath of air—the very sound of Lenlys' name always gave him a sensation of smothering—he was wondering who the "some one" was in Algiers who wanted

to see Lenlys. And then, abruptly, he stood stock-still. The papers at home had mentioned his entrance into the Foreign Legion; of course Lenlys had read them! Had he come here out of sheer bravado? Did he merely wish to show Gershom that he was no sneaking coward, hiding in dark corners for the rest of his life?

Many things that he had recently observed confirmed his conviction regarding Lenlys' light view of personal responsibility. He had seen him cheat at cards—so cleverly that only a watcher like Gershom could have detected it. And from the piles of letters addressed to Lenlys that had come to the hotel desk on the first of the month marked with the names of tradespeople, he deduced that Lenlys was as careless about debts of money as debts of love.

But his courage—that was another matter!

Gershom was angrier than he had ever been at this new evidence of the fellow's insolent daring. He tossed away his cigar and was turning back to the hotel when he was accosted by a messenger from Aicha. Would he please come to her at once? With a sense of relief, he summoned a *voiture* and set out for the red-rose, white-washed house.

Aicha was waiting for him in the big Romanesque room, in her dancing costume, to tell him that their plan was now ready for its initial movement. Lenlys was to dine to-morrow evening with the Englishwoman in her apartment at the hotel. Afterward, he would probably go to his own rooms directly across the hall. A narrow iron balcony hung with rose vines ran the length of the two apartments. This was rarely used, the rooms opening on a pergola opposite, which was spacious and comfortable. A cluster of palm trees threw the little balcony into deep shadow, and from its purple depths one could look into the rooms beyond with-

out being observed—if one could get safely to the balcony.

"You are to leave your hotel to-morrow," said Aicha, "and go directly to this one. Register, have your luggage sent up, then, at the psychological moment, make your way to this so-small balcony. You can do it easily enough—at eight, perhaps, when every one is at dinner. I will be there waiting for you."

"But how are you to reach the balcony?"

Aicha shrugged.

"Need one worry about that, monsieur?"

She explained that from the tiny gallery they would watch till Lenlys went to his own rooms. A noiseless entrance through the window—chloroform, if necessary—the gnarled and twisted vines at the corner forming a ladder of escape, and a waiting carriage in the shadows—

Yes, it was daring, but nothing risked, nothing gained. Besides, by the time Lenlys went to his bedroom, it would be late and half the hotel asleep. In the streets and the cafés, Lenlys was always accompanied by others. This was really the only way.

Gershom looked thoughtfully at Aicha as she sat cross-legged among the yellow pillows of the largest of the enormous couches, smoking one of her interminable cigarettes. She seemed so completely mistress of herself that he couldn't help wondering if her composure would last straight through this thing she had planned.

Presently, leaning on her elbow, the smoke rings circling fantastically about her turbaned head, she exclaimed:

"I think I've discovered why Haven came here! He adores being regarded as utterly fearless. He evidently found out you were in Algiers, and he wants to show the world that he is not afraid."

Exactly his own conclusion. Well—perhaps the dungeon below stairs would

intimidate even the dauntless Lenlys! He reached for one of Aicha's cigarettes and lit it, and was surprised to find that his hand was not quite steady.

At a quarter past eight the following evening, Gershom, having settled himself at his new address, made his way cautiously to the shadowy and deserted balcony. Already Aicha was there, a shapeless huddle in her brown cloak. She had spoken of the vine ladder at the corner—of course she had climbed it; she was as noiseless and agile as a cat!

"Hs-sh!"

Her hand was instantly on his arm, and she pointed. Not three feet away, the light from above falling clearly on their faces, sat Haven Lenlys and the English girl. Lenlys was smoking—as a man smokes after a particularly good dinner. The Englishwoman, in severe white, sat sedately in a straight gold chair, her eyes fixed in a half-hypnotized manner upon him.

"But you must have had adventures, Mr. Lenlys—a man like you. There must be a great many memories in your career that you would share with a romance-loving girl."

"Ah, but, my dear, romance goes when one lingers to remember. Forget—forget quickly; that is the creed of one who lives overmuch. For every cup of wine there are lees at the bottom. When one recalls the taste of the wine, one also remembers the bitterness of the dregs. Look ahead—not into the shadows of the past. Love is a ghost, and the dead are dead. There is always to-morrow."

And just for an instant—or was it the imagination of the two watchers?—there went over the bland features of Haven Lenlys a slight contraction of pain that gave the lie to his smiling philosophy.

"Oh, but, Mr. Lenlys, that's rather horrible. I want to remember. There are so many beautiful things."

"But you are very young, Miss Dighton. Your roses have no thorns—yet. When you reach midchannel, there will always be the undertow. Stay in the shallow while you may and play with your thornless roses." He bent over her, took up her strong white fingers, looked gravely into her eager face. "You are thinking of me in hero terms. Don't, I pray you. I am a very ordinary he-man. Just now I am longing more than anything in the world to kiss you."

She fluttered, blushed, looked down. With that inborn coquetry indigenous even to stately English maidens, she slowly lifted her white lids, looked directly at him, then at the floor again.

"Well—why don't you?" her eyes had said plainly.

He put an arm about her and bent down to her lips. Then, some renaissance of passion surging in him—he had been in the trenches and had not seen any woman of his class for months—he pulled her roughly against him and kissed her violently and brutally—for the brute came easily to the surface in this facile and passionate man. He had loved too many lily maidens to be intimidated by the youth and purity of this one. For a moment the charm of Pan, the young god, was obscured by sheer appetite. He was clever, but the years had taken toll of his finesse. He no longer had the delicacy of spirit that enabled him to hide his hand and stalk his prey gracefully. This is the tragedy of many Haven Lenlyses.

As for the girl in his arms, after one gasp of astonishment, she wrenched herself free from him and stared, startled, into his eyes. And what she saw there killed forever her faith in the innate chivalry and cleanness of men. Sensual as the eyes of a satyr, wiped free of everything but coarse, momentary desire, she saw the long record of his amours—one woman after another, losing something of his soul

with each, gradually narrowing to one thing only—to avail himself physically of the admiration of women who still found him fascinating. He had lost the power to love decently. That gay, charming manner of his was the white-wash of the sepulcher.

"I—I loathe you!" breathed the English girl, shivering with rage. "I thought you were the right sort! My father didn't like you—men can read men—but I defended you. I'd been reading Ouida, and I fancied you a sort of *Chasseur d'Afrique*. Oh—I never want to see you again!"

Over the satyrlike leer came back, very slowly, the old boyish insouciance.

"Oh, but my dear, please!"

"Go—go! If you don't, I shall call some one. I don't know how I could ever have admired you! You must be old, fearfully old—at least as old as my father. I suppose it was because one expects all men in Algiers to be like the heroes in the books. Well—I've learned my lesson. Hereafter I shall accept father's judgments."

And, very deliberately, she turned and walked out of the room, leaving him standing there.

It was the rudeness of an angry child, but it struck home. Left alone, Lenlys had reddened, furiously angry. Then he stalked to the door, slammed it behind him, and went across the hall to his rooms.

The watchers outside crept along step by step till they stood just outside his window. Very carefully Lenlys drew the curtains before the other windows, apparently regarding the iron balcony as negligible. Slowly he began to undress. He discarded his natty uniform, took from his well-shaped legs the puttees, rolled them, and put them aside. Then, in front of the mirror, he carefully removed a toupee, brushing back the few straying locks it had covered. With an absorption so deep it indicated that he was engaged in a thing of in-

estimable importance, he massaged cosmetics into the skin of his face and hands and tonic into his scalp, as carefully as a French specialist. When he got up and the light shone full on him, he looked what he was—a played-out roué, with inexorable Nature demanding payment for her broken laws. He looked old and tired. His mouth sagged into bitter, unbecoming lines; his neck was lean and wrinkled. Stripped of his glamour, he was infinitely pathetic and rather ridiculous. "*There is always to-morrow!*" No—for Haven Lenlys there would be only a few to-morrows. Soon even the most gullible of women would fail to respond to his fast-failing charm. Already it was a matter of clever artifice.

In the shadow of the balcony vines, Gershom and Aicha looked at each other. That silent exchange held less of bitterness than sheer, sudden humor! And then Gershom felt his arm seized and himself drawn gently, but firmly, away from the window.

"Now?" he whispered dubiously.

But Aicha had reached the corner where the shadows lay deepest and the great vine roots formed a ladder.

"Go down quickly," she said. "I will follow. Hs-sh! Cautiously."

"But——" He was bewildered.

"Hurry! Don't talk! Some one may hear us. *The voiture*—— I will explain when we've got away."

Twenty minutes later, when they were swinging through the great, hot night, under the towering palms, down a twisting and sweet-smelling road, Aicha turned to him impulsively.

"Why should we have gone on with it? Don't you see? It would have been a farce—simply not worth while. One must have a worthy foe to make revenge interesting."

Then, as Gershom was silent, she hurried on:

"To see himself fading—growing old—losing the love of women, knowing

that his soul's gone and that he can never recapture it, seeing himself tawdry and unfulfilled—this will be the bitterness of death to him. He has lived for the body, and when the body fails him, his hell will come. That absurd yellow toupee! He didn't use to have that, monsieur!" Aicha laughed hysterically. "He's quite preposterous—utterly harmless—certainly not worth one's bothering with. Don't you understand? 'The long, long shadows on the grass'—they're pointing his way, and *he knows it!*"

"I think I do understand," said Gershom quietly. Back in his brain was running a line from an old play: "*The vendettas of men are superfluous. Man is his own revenge.*"

The moonlight sifted through the trees, pearling Aicha's face, out of which all the hardness had gone—a face at once weary and desirous, and touched with a shy, awakening repentance. Something in the look of those sweet, brilliant eyes, fastened upon him, ran through his nerves like a drug. The lonely craving of his heart reached out toward her like spiritual talons.

"Aicha—you mean—you do not love this man now?"

"Love him?" said Aicha with a gay little laugh. "That ridiculous old beau with his dyed toupee? No, no, my friend. To-night I have seen tragedy—and also comedy. A comedy is the clean act that cuts away festering memories."

The centuries whirled through him as the warm, perfumed body cuddled close against his arm.

"Then—Aicha? My Aicha!"

In the swathing darkness of the Orient night, she brushed his cheek ever so lightly with her lips.

"Yes, kiss me, monsieur. When one has forgotten, he may begin to remember."





# Con Amore

By Wyndham Martyn

Author of "Valedictories," etc.

JESSOP knew that anything might happen during the many-coursed dinner that was to come. The discoverable secrets of a woman's life may be bared in much less time than that. But he thanked the high gods that the Mrs. Latimer whom he had taken in was one of Eve's fairer daughters.

"This is a pleasure," he murmured.

"And your idea of pleasure?" she demanded.

"The certainty of not being bored."

"Or the hope of it? Which?"

"No more than the hope," he admitted.

"You pose, perhaps, as being frank?"

He smiled at her. It was the look of youth that he tried to assume and, since he was five and thirty, he conveyed it with an art that he had not possessed in the callow years.

"Not even of being truthful," he confessed.

"One would hardly expect that in polite society. It's only ill-natured people who insist on the infernal verities."

"Your distinction between frankness and truth may not be mine," Jessop said.

"The sort of frankness I mean," Mrs. Latimer returned, "is the opportunity some interesting person gives me of learning the things about him that he wants me to learn."

"Then I am naturally frank," he assured her.

It was while a man on her other side claimed Mrs. Latimer's momentary attention that Jessop had the opportunity

to look closely at her. There was no question of her beauty. And it was the kind of sophisticated beauty which is so much more subtle than the obvious loveliness of youth. There was about her, too, more than a hint of the profound worldly wisdom which was conversational ozone to him. He was certain she had never told any living being that he was "perfectly grand," after the habit of middle-class minds.

He tried to remember what their common hostess had said about her. He recalled that Mrs. Lambert was unhappily married and possessed great wealth and religious convictions which prevented divorce. Religious convictions, as Jessop defined them, were merely prejudices for which convention fought with dignity. He believed in the sincerity of none of them. To his mind, they cloaked real motives.

"So you are naturally frank," she said, suddenly turning from the man on her right and resuming the conversation, "and wish me to learn only the pleasant things about you?"

She had long, crescent eyes, purple blue, and their expression baffled him who had spent half his lifetime in translating such looks into language.

"That depends," he said, smiling.

"Upon what?" she demanded.

"If I am to see no more of you than the hour or two we spend at this dinner table, I can betray myself with no fear of the future. But if I am to have the happiness of seeing you again, I have a different method."

"Only two methods?"

"A dozen," he told her, "all carefully planned and standardized by experience, changed a little here and a little there as the years go by."

"You train, then, as men do in athletics?"

"Precisely," he admitted.

She frowned a little.

"Isn't that rather like a professional?"

"I am a professional," he assured her, "if constant training makes me one."

"To what end?" she asked.

"There is only one end," he said.

"Love. I am eternally searching for some woman who will represent to me all that I have lost—some beautiful creature who will convince me that I have built a wall about paradise and the apple orchards are only for her and me."

"So all these dinners and dances are mere elimination tests! You go looking feverishly for the perfect woman. Isn't the idea rather old?"

"It's taken me a score of years to find. At fifteen, I was a cynic steeped in Schopenhauer, who is a god to one at that age. I'm mellowing gradually. I shall end as a kindly old gentleman with a beard."

"Nevertheless, your life must be one constant disappointment. You look for the perfect woman and paradise, and are getting gray without finding her. Poor pilgrim!"

Jessop would like to have protested that he was not gray. There was, indeed, a touch of silver over each ear, but nearly all women adored it, claiming that it made a distinguished-looking man of one who had always been handsome.

"Pilgrims have their consolations," he reminded her, "and all apple trees are not in paradise."

She looked into Jessop's face with eyes that enthralled him. He felt less

sure of himself. He became less certain of the inviolability of his defensive armor and descended almost to the level of the ordinary man. He could not banish the fear that she was laughing at him. And to one who had been accustomed to be laughed with, the thought was fearsome.

"The perfect woman, when you find her," she smiled, "may not like to take an experimenter to her heart. We are not all Penelopes, to forgive our wanderers their philanderings with fair-tressed Circes."

"Surely you are not advocating a life of virtue?" Jessop was almost shocked at the idea.

"It will be the fashion some day," she affirmed.

"Not in my lifetime, thank God!" he said fervently.

The idea so appalled him that he waved his caviar away. Virtue triumphant! The final triumph of non-conformist conscience! And this from Mrs. Latimer, who might have every man she met at her feet if she chose! He tried to think what common report said about her husband. Latimer was one of the tobacco millionaires, a disolute man and given to violence. Jessop remembered hearing that he had beaten his wife. When he had heard it, the thing had made little impression on him. He had a theory that women of his class had altogether too easy a time. But to beat this gorgeous creature! Jessop felt, in his first flush of rage, that he regretted the duel was extinct. It would have given him tingling pleasure to send his seconds—or whoever was sent—and on some fair greensward stretch Jack Latimer in his own gore.

A second later, he knew that the idea was foolish; but that he had experienced it proved his youth was not irretrievably gone from him. It amazed him, too, when he remembered that he had not felt so viciously toward an unwronged husband for years. So busy

was he with his own thoughts that he did not notice that Mrs. Latimer conversed animatedly with the man at her right, old Whitcomb, the banker.

"So they wished Vivian Jessop on to you," he grunted. "Why?"

"Probably because he's clever and entertaining."

"He's as conceited a pup as Manhattan has to offer," Mr. Whitcomb insisted, "and he can't speak the truth to save his neck."

"Most amusing men are conceited," she reminded the banker, "and nobody can be entertaining at a dinner party and remain truthful."

"Don't believe anything he says about me," said Mr. Whitcomb.

"Your tone is a confession that he knows your secrets. You've a dreadful past, Mr. Whitcomb. Confess it!"

"Not a word," said the banker, "not a word!"

He preened himself, with that evidence of senile pleasure which robs old age of its meed of respect. His manner conveyed the impression that in his day he had been a dreadful dog, one of those incomparable mixtures of Don Juan, Lord Byron, and the late Colonel James Fisk.

She turned from the old man at a word from Jessop.

"That isn't fair," he protested. "He'll bore you to death."

"Why does he dislike you?" she questioned.

"I did him the injury irreparable. I dragged down the scarlet past he had built, to prove that he had run for political office in a mud-slinging State and had emerged spotless. One can't expect forgiveness for such a thing as that."

It seemed to her that Vivian Jessop sought to bring the conversation toward more intimate channels. She noticed that he hardly tasted some of the exquisite dishes set before him, while she partook of them with the interest that

only a woman who has never prepared it can have in food.

"Do you know," he said presently, "that you're most tremendously fascinating?"

"Which method are you using?" she demanded.

"Method?" he returned, for the moment wondering what she meant. "I speak only the truth when I tell you it is a new one. I'm impelled to be honest, a thing I usually avoid. I've never met any women who gives me the impression that you do of having the magic secrets of fascinating men, subjugating them, making them what you want them to be."

"Circe did that," she reminded him.

"But Odysseus had no cause to complain," he said more boldly.

"And you have no Penelope to chide your wandering, have you," she asked, "no once-loved wife to sit up for you?"

"I have fought off matrimony as much as I have the society of people who speak of 'bridge whist.'" He was more in earnest than she had seen him. "When I think of your life and how you are chained to that man, I'm glad."

"But you know nothing of my life!" she cried.

He adopted his wholly superior air.

"I know all about it. I know your husband, Jack Latimer. I know your faith won't permit divorce. I know that in a few years your beauty must fade. Love alone keeps a woman beautiful. You can't keep young by going to mass and looking after your children's health. Your husband will never reform. He's unutterably coarse."

"Ought you to say that to me, Mr. Jessop?"

"Of course not," he laughed. "I ought to commend a life of dull piety to you. I ought to say it is better to be a sexless saint than a magnificently lovely woman. I ought to tell you that I'm no fit companion for a woman

placed as you are. But how can I tell you such nonsense? Lady with eyes like almonds of amethyst, you know no supreme gift should be wasted. There may be many beautiful women who, if they felt they had a vocation, might become saints. But where did you ever hear of a saint becoming so entrancing that she set men's pulses flickering as you've set mine?"

It was an agonized moment when the fear crossed his mind that she was laughing at him. It was hardly possible, though, that this could be true. The method he was using—number eight on his list—was so exquisitely done, the delicacy and tonal beauty so perfect, that it seemed hardly possible she should remain wholly unimpressed. He assured himself that his technique was flawless—and yet the dismal fear that something had miscarried could not be banished.

Then a great illumination came. His touch was uncertain because the human equation had intervened. *He was in love.* It seemed to him for the moment that he was outside of himself, sitting on the bronze chandeliers over the dining table looking down at Mrs. Lambert and Vivian Jessop. When he came to himself, he found that life now spelled itself with a capital letter, and he was envying old Whitcomb his middle-aged piety. Too often he had played his part as do mummers on the boards, mouthing other men's words and finding little joy therein. But now it was to be literally *con amore*. And the beauty of it was that the yoke of matrimony—from whose dread he had not yet shaken himself—need not shackle him. What better mission could that great steam yacht of his, lying at Savannah, have than to take them to far southern seas, to the islands of the lotus-eaters?

Love was never permanent, he knew, but there might be years of it before him. While she was beautiful, he

would love her. After that, she would love him.

At one end of the dinner table, he caught the eye of his hostess and smiled. He had never liked the good lady until now. But henceforth he would cherish her memory kindly. She should live in it as one of those humble folk to which the high gods intrust sacred missions. Of course, when the scandal came out and it was known that he had eloped with Mrs. Latimer, his hostess might take blame to herself that she had introduced them, although it was no fault of hers that she had fulfilled her destiny.

"The trouble with opera," he said to the amethyst-eyed beauty, "is that it isn't true to life, too dreadfully artificial, but I should like to arise and sing a passionate aria on the awakening of love, just as heroic tenors do in music drama."

"Whose love?" she demanded.

"Mine," he said, with the faint trace of diffidence that assured him his passion was genuine.

"I wonder if you would make a good lover," she meditated.

"You will be able to answer that later," he declared.

"I wonder if it would be worth while," she smiled.

"Worth while!" he echoed tremulously. "It will be the joy that generations die without attaining! And think of it," he added in a different tone, "I don't even know your name! If it isn't a pretty one, don't tell me. Invent something. I can think of you only in terms of beauty."

He looked about him in astonishment. People were rising from their seats. Dinner, it seemed, was finished. The suddenness of the thing irritated Jessop. It was like bringing the ninth symphony to an end in the middle of a magic phrase. He looked about him and frowned. He even spoke severely to Mr. Whitcomb. Then he realized that

she who was to fill his life had left him to merge herself with the other guests. She would be waiting for him later when he had brought the trying process of mental readjustment to a happy ending. He wanted to smoke in silence.

Ere he reached the door of the smoking room, his hostess waylaid him.

"I'm sorry things got all mixed to-night," she began, "but I'm sure you enjoyed yourself." She turned to a small, dowdy person at her side. "This is the Mrs. Latimer you were to have taken in."

"Are you sure?" Jessop demanded with asperity.

"Naturally," his hostess declared. "By some accident, you took Miss Orme in."

"Then you've done a very reprehensible thing!" he exclaimed severely. "I'm not sure you haven't wrecked my life."

He stalked into the smoking room and shut the door. He had no doubt that Jack Latimer was right in beating this absurd, weak-eyed woman who had been designed to bore him. Who was Miss Orme?

The first man he saw was Beardsley, an old and tried friend.

"You seemed in great form to-night," Beardsley commented enviously.

"Oh, Lord!" Jessop groaned. "Oh, Lord!"

"Is this the declaration of a newly found faith?" demanded his friend.

"It's the cry of lost liberty."

"Yours?" Beardsley asked.

"It will be your duty," Jessop said, thinking ahead with great clarity, "to buy the ring and see that the right sort of music is played while I marry."

"You?" Beardsley gasped. "Who is she?"

"I don't know," Jessop confessed. "She is only just born. To me she is only two hours old. I did not begin it with marriage in view. I intended it to be merely an indiscretion

attended with all the comforts of home, but now——"

Jessop broke off abruptly. Never had marriage seemed a more honorable estate, a more sacred institution. He did not notice that Beardsley was excitedly informing the other guests.

"Jessop's snared at last," he was declaring, "and all you married men may breathe more freely. The poacher is now turned game warden." He turned to a handsome dark man near by. "Count, you're in the same boat yourself. Congratulate my friend Jessop."

Jessop was not overcordial. While he was willing to concede a certain personal distinction to this member of the old noblesse of France who had won the Croix de Guerre, he resented at such a moment the necessity of talking about anything but himself. He remembered that the count had sat opposite him at dinner. Once or twice he had seen a curious eye bent upon him during his most impassioned moments.

"Your engagement," said the soldier pleasantly, in perfect English, "seems to cause as much astonishment as my own did."

"Ah, indeed?" Jessop returned. He rarely consumed his own nervous energies in listening to what befell others.

"Who is it?" Beardsley insisted on knowing. "If I'm to be best man, I demand to be told the lady's name." A sudden light burst upon him. "By gad, Jessop, was it the corker you took in to dinner?"

Jessop looked as nearly confused as a man of the world may. He felt he was being rushed to declarations he would have withheld.

"It's not to be announced yet," he remarked. "It might annoy the lady enormously."

"It was Barbara Orme he took in," one of the group commented to another. "You remember she divorced

Tommy Fenwick in Paris. She's rich, she's alluring, and far too clever for me. Did you know her in Paris, count?"

"Yes," the Frenchman said, and smiled a little.

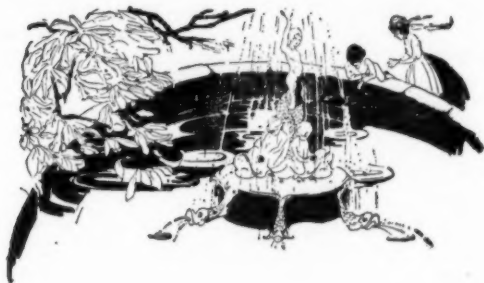
"The idea of my marriage seems to amuse you," said Jessop rather loftily.

"Not of your marriage," the count corrected politely. "That is a thing which may happen to any man. I was interested in the idea of your marriage to Miss Barbara Orme."

Jessop held himself very stiff and erect.

"I think I have the right to demand your reason."

"Most certainly," the count assented. "It is what you call a prior claim. By this time to-morrow, I shall be the most envied of men. Under the circumstances, I fear you will not expect a belated invitation, but you will be interested to hear that the ceremony is to be at noon."



## UNREDEEMED

I HAVE believed in the old gods—  
Feared them at night,  
Dared them in the dawn again,  
Seen them in the noonday light.

I have beaten drums for them,  
Blown shrill reeds,  
Pricked the vein and drunk my blood for them,  
Gathered fruit and planted seeds.

Christ have mercy on my soul,  
Mary plead for me!  
I was born by burning mountains  
Much too far from Galilee.

SALOMON DE LA SELVA.





# "Happiness, Ltd."

By F. E. Bailly

Author of "Her Feet Beneath Her  
Petticoat,"  
"Yesterday's Roses," etc.

## IV.—Meatless Days

**B**UT why do it?" queried Mr. Frankie Sheringham, an old friend of thirty torrid summers, invalided from the army, who loved her. "Why? *Pourquoi? Cur? Warum? Por qué?* I don't know any more languages."

Helen Vereker poured him out a second cup of tea, the golden specks in her brown eyes dancing with fiendish joy. She sat, gowned in the dearest "little" black frock, amid the pink and gray of her Bond Street consulting rooms, and Miquette, an adorable flapper, disguised in the black pinafore of a French school-girl, short enough to reveal distracting black silk legs, ministered unto her. Helen's hair, the one perfect shade of brown, shone finer than silk spun for queens' palaces, and the charm of her voice recalled golden honey dripping slowly from the comb. She had a breathless eagerness, a suppressed expectation of adventure, peculiarly appealing in a blasé world.

"Why spread my net in these rather swish apartments, Frankie? Why advertise in the 'ag' column of the *Morning Post*? Why waste money on strangers? Because, you dear old ass, every one's good, but only I know it, and so every one goes about distrusting his neighbor, when the neighbor's just as good as himself. And as everybody's good really, every one ought to be

happy, and I want to make them happy, because they're such *dears*. See?"

"You're such a dear, and I don't see, and I never shall. But I s'pose you'll go on nursing the unconquerable hope, clutching the inviolable shade, till your eyes are opened and you see the skulls and bones of people's 'orrible natures. Meanwhile, I'll go on taking care of you, please, because I love it, and you'd as soon I did it as any one else, p'r'aps? Fank you."

A bell trilled in the outer reception room. Miquette, murmuring in the tongue of her ancestors, "*Encore un client,*" hastened decorously to investigate. Mr. Sheringham reached for hat and stick in preparation for departure. The advent of Miquette, a stranger in her wake, stayed his retiring footsteps. If he had not been so old and battered, he would have gaped.

There followed Miquette yet another flapper, of an aching beauty whose sole just tribute would have been respectful, happy tears. She looked like something out of a picture. Her frock, suited to the June sunshine, had, even as its wearer, a tender appeal full of promise, a magic of youth infinitely affecting. Her hat, her shoes, her stockings were so many artistic finger posts indicating worshipfully the sheer perfection of her face, her little feet, her chiseled ankles. There lay in her vel-

vet eyes, blue as the brine-dark deep, a calm acceptance of these unchallengeable facts, a recognition of destiny. She was not in the least surprised at the effect she produced: it had for her the inevitability of rain, colds in the head, or mud on the Western Front.

"Miss Orchid Savory," murmured Miquette, and cat-walked almost admiringly into her little electric kitchen.

"I hope you aren't busy?" crooned Miss Savory, in a voice that matched her appearance. "I saw this in the *Morning Post*. It struck me that if you can't help me, nobody can."

She held out her slender, gloved hand. In it lay a small cutting which read:

"Every one ought to be happy. If you are not happy, consult Happiness, Ltd., 2000 Bond Street, W. Hours 2-5 p. m. Tel. 2527 West."

"I think I'd better go," said Mr. Frankie Sheringham, with pardonable reluctance. "Good-by, Helen."

He bowed politely to Miss Savory and took a pace toward the door.

"Please don't let me drive you away," objected the visitor, with faint hostility in her accents.

Mr. Sheringham hesitated momentarily, knowing this to be wrong. Helen, magnanimous to an unfeminine degree, broke in:

"Mr. Sheringham is a great friend of mine who helps occasionally in my work. It all depends, of course, on what you're going to tell me. Do sit down. Miquette, bring more tea."

The beautiful flapper curved delicately into a chintz-upholstered cane lounge, extending her slender limbs along the leg rest with a grateful sigh.

"He had better stay, then. He ought to understand the situation, if anybody does. My trouble, Miss—er—um?"

"Vereker."

"Miss Vereker, is men."

"I should never have thought it," commented Frankie, with, for him, extraordinary clumsiness.

The distressed damsel turned on him two jewels of violet ice.

"I suppose you think men are attractive? If you were a girl, you'd know better. They never leave me a moment's peace. They pester me all day long. All the navy and half the army seem to want to marry me. Is there nowhere I can go to escape them? But why should I go anywhere? Why can't I live quietly at home and not be bothered?"

"You see," explained Helen, stifling insane giggles, "you're much too pretty and charming to pass unnoticed."

"I know that," snapped Miss Savory, "but that's my affair. I don't fling myself at the head of every good-looking man I meet. Why should they fall in love, as they're pleased to call it, with me?"

She stirred her tea in plaintive annoyance. Frankie's eye met Helen's over her head with awful calm.

"I know just how you feel," he began soothingly, that Helen might have leisure to recover. "Sometimes I long, myself, to go into a convent and produce handmade lingerie in solitude for the rest of my life. But these things cannot be. We have our duty to society. We are not free agents."

"Rot!" retorted the visitor. "It's simply because I'm a girl. No man would stand it for a moment."

"But isn't it rather nice to be—er—admired, not to be a wallflower?" insinuated Frankie childishly.

"Believe me, after one is fifteen and knows one's power, there's nothing in it."

"If you were to become engaged?" hazarded Helen.

"I should fall out of the frying pan into the fire. Better be bored by fifty different men than by the same one all the time. Really, Miss Vereker, how would you like it?" Her eye singled out Helen's ringless engagement finger.

"If you were to tell me a little more

about yourself, I could help you more easily," murmured Helen, picking up a pad and a fountain pen from her writing table.

"Well, I live with my sister, in Lowndes Square. She's five years older than I, and I'm seventeen. Bilge—that's Angela's husband—is at the front, and she canteens all day and amuses woundeds and on-leaves in the evenings at dances and things. I do, too, as a matter of fact, but I'm fed up. She's safe, as she's married, but six proposals an evening do feed one most frightfully. They simply put lines on the face."

"War is war," suggested Frankie.

"But it lasts such a long time. One could stick it out for a swift campaign. I believe they call this a war of attrition. I'm tired of being attrished or whatever it is."

Silence fell upon the gathering. Through the open window came a murmur of distant traffic, the warm, bituminous, summer smell of London. Then the great inspiration came to Helen.

"I think we're all ragged to pieces. I've got the dearest little seaside cottage at Greysands in Sussex. You'd better come and stay there with me for a bit. Frankie, your complexion rather resembles an underdone fruit tart as far as color goes. You shall come down, too, and stop at the Cat and Faceache, or whatever the inn's called. Let's go to-morrow. Can you be ready, both of you?"

"I think I should love it," sighed Miss Savory. "I shall wear very simple clothes."

"Well, then, Frankie, look out for the trains, and ring me up and come and fetch me, like a dear thing."

"Right-o, Helen," he assented meekly.

A thought struck the beautiful client.

"Is Greysands anywhere near Wyeport? There's a sailorman stationed

there who's a bit persistent. I'm rather afraid——"

"It's a good twelve miles away."

"In that case," said Miss Savory, rising, "hurrah, hurrah, hoo-jolly—yah! Thanks awf'ly. Will you let me know the train and the station and all that? Good-by. It's been perfectly sweet of you."

"A fractious little piece, but decorative, undoubtedly decorative," commented Frankie. "Helen darling, this job requires much sage council and chewing the rag. Will you be an angel and dine with me to-night and wear the gold frock? I should love it."

"But I've got to pack——"

"Miquette can pack much better than you. Please!"

"All right," she promised, and a dimple peeped out at either side of her charming mouth.

## II.

Upon a convenient rock detached from the headland which shelters the bay at Greysands, there reclined three figures in university-pattern swimming costumes. Frankie, in dark navy, admired dispassionately the sylphlike form of Orchid in saxe blue, to tone with her eyes, and Helen, divine in cardinal. The smoke of his cigarette curled idly heavenward; his twin goddesses consumed chocolate with lazy abandon. Their boat, the *Saucy Jane*, rocked gently on a summer sea.

"She was the only saucy thing in Greysands till we came down," mused Orchid, admiring her own legs. "The women here fairly chill the blood. Helen, where do they get those clothes?"

"Thank Heaven there are no men except the curate, who is a nootral," murmured Frankie piously. "Your rest cure will be complete, Orchid—a long series of meatless days, as it were. Glorious!"

"I suppose the Reverend Ormsby

Simple will be at the sewing party with the other ladies this afternoon?" queried Helen.

"It will hardly be quite nice if he is. I understand we are to fell, or hem, or whatever it is, pajamas. I doubt if I should feel quite maidenly sewing pajamas in the presence of a gentleman. I'm only a young girl," objected Orchid, trying hard to blush.

"He probably knows quite as much about sewing as you do," retorted Frankie. "Give me a chocolate, and then let's go home. You'll both be so irritable if you get chills."

They enveloped themselves in bathing wraps and sculled slowly homeward. Helen's cottage faced the beach, and the Cat and Faceache lay hard by. Frankie bade them a touching farewell.

"I'm writing an appreciation of war poetry for the papers this afternoon, but my sympathy will go out to the unhappy wearers of the pajamas, all the same," he explained carefully.

The sewing party met at two-thirty in the church rooms. Helen and Orchid, in their simple linen frocks, felt, among the rather elaborate dresses of the ladies, like two Greek statues interned in Madame Tussaud's. A hawk-faced spinster of fifty years or so cut out the garments—intended for our sick and wounded heroes—more by right of seniority and iron will than from an intimate acquaintance with pajamas as pajamas.

"Miss Clack always cuts out," explained Mrs. Sturgeon, who came bringing Maud and Dorothy, moist and simpering in white. "She never cuts to waste. It's such a responsibility, the cutting. And whom have we here?"

She beamed mechanically upon Orchid, without approval. Orchid, in her little linen frock, made Maud and Dorothy look such lumps. To console herself, Mrs. Sturgeon thanked Providence that Maud and Dorothy were not

as Orchid, which ought to have satisfied her.

"This is Miss Savory, who is staying with me," said Helen, looking as if Mrs. Sturgeon were the one person in the world she wanted to see, as indeed Mrs. Sturgeon was not. "She takes the greatest interest in war work in London."

"And what do you do, my dear?" went on Mrs. Sturgeon. "Knitting or tying up parcels or making swabs? Dorothy and Maud have just made their five-hundredth swab each this year."

"Oh, I generally dance with the wounded and on-leaves at the Grafton and people's places," said Orchid casually. She was too much interested in Maud and Dorothy to pay much attention. She had never seen anything like them before. "The worst of it is they will propose after about ten minutes, and ask for a cammy ribbon or something as a keepsake. What's a swab? Is it something to eat?"

"A swab," retorted Mrs. Sturgeon coldly, "is something they use in hospitals. Perhaps you will sit with Miss Vereker at this table. Maud—Dorothy, go over to the other end of the room, darlings. I see Mrs. Clutterbuck nodding to you."

"The taboo is put on me already, Helen. What have I done?" giggled Orchid, trying desperately to thread a needle.

"You know quite well. See how she keeps her lady daughters apart! She's afraid you'll put dress into their heads."

"Remember, ladies, that the buttons go on the right-hand side of the coat," thundered Miss Clack, as one to whom pajamas are a thing of naught.

There entered at this moment Reverend Ormsby Semple.

Even as a pretty girl is surrounded at a dance by men, or as hinted beer creates thirst, so did his advent concentrate in him the interest of the gathering, Helen and Orchid always ex-

cepted. Mrs. Clutterbuck bridled; Mrs. Sturgeon flung out her banners on the outward wall; Miss Clack's iron features relaxed; Dorothy and Maud covered their lumpishness in smiles. They were sixteen and seventeen respectively, and wore sensible shoes.

"Good afternoon, ladies," intoned the Reverend Ormsby. "Ever carrying on the good work, I see. Mrs. Sturgeon, I have your report about your district. I wonder if either of your charming daughters would take a Sunday-school class temporarily, if necessary? Miss Tukes is affected with a severe chill, and the doctor is adamant."

"I'm sure they'd be delighted, wouldn't you, darlings?" exclaimed their proud mother. "Poor Miss Tukes! How sad!"

Maud and Dorothy simpered self-consciously.

"Dear me," went on Mr. Semple, "I see fresh faces. May I beg you, Mrs. Sturgeon——"

Coldly Mrs. Sturgeon performed the ceremony of introduction.

"How wonderfully organized the parish is!" began Helen, in meek awe. "It must mean endless work."

"We do our poor best," sighed the curate. "Miss Savory, I feel sure you perform a great deal of good among the sick and poor in your own neighborhood. We appreciate your—ah—coming among us. As I always say, the bright faces of our young girls——"

Orchid passed an inquiring finger over her perfect nose. She could not discover it to be shiny.

"Oh, I live in London," she explained. "Couldn't we have a few windows open, Mr. Semple? There's an awful fog in here, isn't there?"

"Certainly! Certainly!" he beamed, and hastened to open them.

Dark looks converged on the unhappy Orchid. Miss Clack sniffed distinctly twice. The mouths of Dorothy and Maud hung open in astonishment.

"Are you going to read to us this afternoon, Mr. Semple?" queried Dorothy with simple roguishness.

"Well—er—that is—if any one——"

He glanced anxiously at Orchid, but she had bent over the pajamas in absorbed gloom. It was as if she cast him before Dorothy.

The curate sat down and read about a third of "David Copperfield" in a feeling and thoughtful manner. The ladies sewed with soft smiles, laughing in the right places.

At four, Orchid's nightmare ended. Helen, feeling thankful for an amusing afternoon, piloted her homeward with tact and affection. After tea and a bath and a change into a dinner frock, Orchid felt sufficiently strong to take a mild interest in Frankie, who came as their one guest. Helen felt she ought not to be hard on the youthful stranger who had fluttered to her for rest and sanctuary from men.

"They wore their last year's best frocks and gnashed their tusches at me," complained Orchid to Frankie. "They kept their frumpy daughters away from me as if I had measles. The mother nearly stabbed me with her scissors when I asked the curate person to open the windows because I was being poisoned. We are indeed far from perfect civilization, Frankie."

"Nonsense, baby! What do these things matter to you at your time of life?" he responded. "Think how little Helen suffered! She's had hours of them down here. 'N' you want a rest from men, and these are women. There is no third alternative. Ungrateful girl!"

Helen, who knew he was cross only because he wanted to be alone with her, gave him a little smile all to himself privately, and went down to the gate to say good night when he left, neglecting Orchid, who remained curled up on a chesterfield, mildly thoughtful. Certainly a female world is unexciting.

## III.

Mrs. Clutterbuck, meeting Mrs. Sturgeon outside the war-work center, made a face supposed to indicate pleasure and passed remarks about the sunshine. Then she got down to business.

"That poor girl!" she began.

"She dresses just like an actress," commented Mrs. Sturgeon. "I can't think what her mother's about to let her. My Maud and Dorothy wouldn't dream of it."

Evidently there was only one poor girl in Greysands.

"Perhaps she has no mother to guide her. I think we ought to do something. We might speak to that Miss Vereker, only she's rather a funny girl. I wonder if she's engaged to that man."

"She ought to be if she isn't. If I catch him looking at Maud or Dorothy should——"

"I don't think you will, dear—not at such sweet, good girls," she added hastily. "Couldn't we get Mr. Semple to speak to Orchid? A clergyman has an authority, as it were——"

"I don't see why we should have anything to do with her," objected the mother of Maud and Dorothy. Mrs. Clutterbuck possessed one boy who wore a little velvet suit on Sundays. "He once told Dorothy he dislikes any girl who isn't modest and good. He has many cares beside fast strangers."

"Still, a seed sown in good season works wonders," mused Mrs. Clutterbuck. "We have our duty to our neighbors."

"Well," said Mrs. Sturgeon, folding her chins resentfully into one another, "I shall have nothing whatever to do with it."

Nevertheless, Mrs. Clutterbuck was a stickler in a quiet way. That very afternoon, she had the curate to tea. Being a wealthy subscriber to charity, she could count on a respectful hearing. She outlined her scheme for the reform

of Orchid, while the curate wrinkled his brow in thought.

"She is not the kind of girl," ended Mrs. Clutterbuck, "to listen to older women. Men are her gods. You, Mr. Semple, are a man and a clergyman. I feel this task is laid upon you."

Mr. Semple hardly relished the job, in a sense. In another sense he did, because, although wicked, Orchid had a fair face and a delicious form.

"I will meditate over the question, Mrs. Clutterbuck, and perhaps a way will be revealed," was how he put it, rather preening himself on his tact.

It led him to approach the evil he did not know through the evil he knew to a certain extent, for, meeting Helen on the seashore, he begged permission to consult her on a point of importance, and placed the matter before her.

"It is a delicate question—a delicate question," he boomed. "After all, our parishioners have a right to their views. On the other hand, one would need to be very circumspect. She is at a difficult and light-minded age, Miss Vereker."

Helen gazed at him with candid brown eyes, and her voice almost caressed him.

"I shall not stand in your way, Mr. Semple," she said simply. "If you will come to tea to-morrow, I will see that you have an opportunity of being alone with Orchid."

She left him to meet Frankie, with whom she had an assignation. He beamed fondly at her news.

"Serves her right for being a little puss cat! On the other hand, I wouldn't be in Semple's shoes for something! She'll flet him, Helen darling, and lay the remains reverently on a plate."

He gazed down at her in his affectionate, foolish way.

"I do like you, though," he added, quite irrelevantly.

They wandered away into that happy twilight country man enters upon when



he has ceased to call a lady "Miss Smith," a country that ends at the toll-gate whose levy is an engagement ring. Orchid came to meet them on their return, a brooding, maternal look in her violet eyes. She found it sweet agony to pose as one dead to all these things, smiling upon happy lovers, though Helen explained simply that lovers and friends were not the same thing.

"The curate is coming to see you tomorrow," said Helen politely. "He wishes to talk to you for your good. I've promised him a tête-à-tête. I rely on your being a good girl, Orchid."

"Seeing I am done with men, who cares? Doesn't that sunset absolutely break your heart, Helen? It's like a poached egg dropped upon a blue carpet."

Even as the Monday of our discontent follows the fluffsome week-end of our joy, so into the peace of Orchid's afternoon marched, on that fatal morning, the black, unbeautiful boots of the Reverend Ormsby Semple. Helen received him. But later, with Frankie, she stole away to the uttermost parts of her tiny garden, leaving Orchid to bloom alone in the sitting room.

The Reverend Ormsby sighed. Really she was very delightful. Still, it had to be done.

"Is there anything in the world more charming than a family of baby chicks?" he began. "Beautiful, golden little balls of fluff!"

He paused, but she made no comment.

"And yet, if one of them were to be decked in the vain plumage of the peacock, how the picture would be spoiled! How grieved the others would be! What an example of vanity!"

"I know hardly anything about fowls," murmured Orchid, with round eyes of innocence.

"Well, suppose that beautiful rose yonder were to add to itself the petals

of the lily. How the charm of the rose would be destroyed!"

"But it couldn't, so what's the good of supposing?" replied Orchid rather crossly.

"I speak in parables, Miss Savory."

"Well, then, please don't. I've got rather a headache, Mr. Semple, and I'm very unhappy lately. Not that that concerns you, of course. Don't be afraid. I promise not to be angry with you."

Mr. Semple passed a distressed hand across his moist brow. It was going to be very difficult, he feared.

"The fact is I—er—perhaps, if you could manage to be a little more in keeping with our quiet country parish, Miss Savory, our people would learn to love you more quickly. The garb and customs of town—I fear our ladies here are perhaps a little staid to your eyes. Believe me, they are grieved. They misunderstand you. I regret it. I feel sure they mean well. I—"

"Ah!" said Orchid, nodding sagely. "So I'm the little ball of fluff decked out in the vain plumage of the peacock, am I? And the old ladies don't like it? But, Mr. Semple, my clothes are very plain." She indicated the little linen frock. "Or is the skirt too short, do you think? But then my legs aren't like Maud's and Dorothy's. If they were, I should wear pajamas, or at any rate a skirt touching the ground all round."

"Really——" stammered Mr. Semple.

But Orchid rose, dragged a humply across the room, sat on it beside him, and leaned her fair head against his knee.

"I will sit at your feet and learn," she murmured. "You shall rebuke me and tell me what I ought to do. Don't spare my feelings. It's good for me. I dare say I ought to be beaten, and probably Mrs. Sturgeon would like to do it. Go on!"

Thus Helen and Frankie found them. The curate was babbling he knew not what. He appeared rather like a rabbit hypnotized by a snake. Orchid never raised her eyes. At the advent of the newcomers, he rose and fled.

"Do you realize, Orchid, that that man is practically engaged to Maud Sturgeon?" asked Helen in an awful voice.

Orchid got up with dignity.

"So long as he's not engaged to me, I don't care two hoots who it is!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to lie down! The person has exhausted me!"

She went out slowly, her chin very high. Helen looked at Frankie and sighed.

"I shall have to face an outraged mother now. Frankie, you must go to Wyeport and see the sailorman. He's a Lieutenant Godfrey Marriner. I require him as an alibi for Orchid."

"But, Helen, I don't know him from Adam!"

"Never mind. Just drift in casually. Bring him to dinner to-morrow. Run away now. I want to talk to Orchid."

"But——"

"Sh'hush!" she murmured, and smiled at him. "Be a dear thing! Remember, you always help me."

"Oh—oh, goo!" groaned Frankie in his agony, and fled.

#### IV.

When Frankie, in some trepidation, entered the office of Lieutenant Godfrey Marriner, R. N., who seemed to be naval-transport officer at Wyeport, that individual glanced up at him from a primitive table, only the mildest interest visible upon his clean-shaven aristocratic face.

"I don't know who you are," he observed, "but at the moment I'm signing bills of lading in quintuplicate, and will you kindly wait outside? P'raps you're the mayor, come to offer me the free-

dom of Wyeport. It can't be helped. I have no definite grudge against you, though. Always remember that. Perkins, where the blazes is my pencil?"

Frankie sat down and lit a cigarette.

"I know exactly how urgent it all is. I've been in the army myself," he said delicately. "Do you know any one named Orchid? We have her staying with us. I think she needs you."

The N. T. O. flung his bills of lading on the ground, stood up, and squared his shoulders.

"Come over to my place and have a drink, old dear!" he exclaimed. "Perkins, if any one comes bothering, tell them I'm somewhere down at the docks, and let them walk about till their boots drop off! Come on, what's-your-name. I've lost Orchid this whole fortnight."

Safe in his quarters, Lieutenant Marriner, R. N., poured out the golden waters of forgetfulness and moistened them with soda. Frankie outlined the situation, perhaps accentuating the curate, faintly. His host nodded.

"I'll get away," he promised. "I'll have to be back by five a. m., but that can be worked. I know the M. T. here quite well. Leave it to me. Thanks for coming."

At seven p. m. he sat in Helen's dining room, beautiful in blue and gold. It transpired that, out of Orchid's stained past, there remained at least one worthy dinner gown.

In the aimable fashion beloved of young girls and girls of all ages, she set herself to torture Lieutenant Marriner, R. N. She ignored him. She snubbed him. She devoted herself to Frankie and laughed merrily at the most aged jest. Helen consoled the seafarer as best she could, even allowing one black-lashed eyelid to quiver at an opportune moment. Left alone with Frankie for a brief period, the mouth-ing victim spat fire and brimstone.

"Give me room to maneuver, and I'll

settle this," he implored. "If you'll kindly weigh anchor and put to sea with Miss Vereker, and cruise around the house, I'll draw the enemy into the garden and let go with the heavy armament, the antidesstroyer stuff, and everything else. I love that girl, Sheringham, but she wants beating all the same! Dammit, there are limits! She's driving me mad!"

"It's a pleasant pastime for her. Don't be so beastly selfish. Think of others," rebuked Frankie.

However, he weighed anchor and, with Helen, lay two points to starb'd of the sitting-room French window, which gave on to the garden.

Lieutenant Marriner sat on a rustic bench with his tormentrix, oblivious of its unyielding nature.

"Why are you so unkind?" he murmured.

"I'm not. I'm simply-indifferent. I came here to escape from men, but you come and pester me. I'm not angry. You'll go away, and probably I shall never see you again. You'll find some nice girl to be good to you, no doubt."

Frankie giggled, and Helen punched him. The embryo Nelson choked. Then he loosed his destroyer attack at full speed, under forced draft. He collided Orchid against his chest, uncomfortable with brass buttons, and kissed her effusively.

"I love you," he said fiercely, "and you know you love me, and you're also

going to marry me, only you won't admit it! Do you want me to shake you till your eyes bulge and your teeth drop out?"

"Well," murmured Orchid from his left shoulder, "it's a good job you know your own mind at last! If you only realized what I've had to endure from stray admirers while you were creeping about in horror of me, like a beaten hound— Godfrey, shut up! You're hurting my mouth!"

Frankie put out his hand.

"I congratulate you, little Helen," he said humbly. "You're a marvel."

## V.

Four days later, Frankie dined with Helen at her flat in Queen Anne's Gate. She wore the gold frock, and her beauty and charm rived his adoring heart. Curled up on a chesterfield on the arm of which he had seated himself, she read a pale-blue note from Orchid.

"We shall be married soon, and I want you to be a bridesmaid. I understand Frankie will be Godfrey's best man. Why not—' No—that's nothing to do with it."

"Let me see!" commanded Frankie, but she folded her letter and placed it in safety. For Orchid had continued:

"Why not make it a double event? You know you'll marry Frankie some day. What's the good of mucking about?"



## ALTHEA, AT HER WINDOW

HE swings his cane in manner debonair;  
A white gardenia decks his buttonhole,  
And all his well-kept self, from crown to sole,  
Breathes nonchalance and banishment of care.

How can he stroll along the crowded way  
And bow to passing friends so jauntily?  
How can he? Oh, it hurts my heart to see,  
When I refused him only yesterday!

ARCHIE AUSTIN COATES,



## In the Woods at Midsummer

By Richard Le Gallienne

DO you remember how we used to go  
Into the woods at midsummer—  
For, after all, 'twas not so long ago—  
And leave our horses tethered by the stream,  
And then steal farther in to kiss and dream—  
At midsummer?

A secret place it was of rock and pine.  
There would we eat our bread and drink our wine,  
And laugh—ah, how we laughed the laugh divine  
There in the woods at midsummer!

Then, on a sudden, strange and grave we were,  
With joy like anguish holding fast our eyes,  
While I would frame your face in your deep hair  
Falling across the hills of Paradise—  
And start, for fear 'twere foot of some chance comer,  
There in the woods at midsummer.

The blossoms of the year had ceased to blow,  
Just a green palace, shorn of ornament,  
The July woods, and surely long ago  
Melted the last hid snow, *sans* argument;  
Yet I found both the blossoms and the snow—  
There in the woods at midsummer.

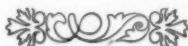




# The Double Cross

By Robert W. Sneddon

Author of "They Also Serve," "The Street of Lost Memories," etc.



MADemoisELLE MARCELLE looked at the clock, frowned, and called the waiter over.

"You are sure M'sieu' Ledoux has not been here?"

"Quite sure, madame."

"It is strange," she murmured, perplexed. "Thank you."

"Perhaps m'sieu' is delayed," suggested the waiter thoughtfully.

"Perhaps' is right." Mademoiselle Marcelle laughed a trifle bitterly. "Six months we have been coming here. Not once has he failed to be on the stroke, and to-day— Well, we shall see!"

The waiter sighed amorously. Mademoiselle was his type—chic, vivacious, with ankles so ravishing that more than once they had attracted his eyes from their proper path and caused him to stumble and break glasses.

"Surely m'sieu' has not been so foolish," he mused aloud.

"So foolish? What do you mean?" asked his customer sharply.

"And mademoiselle such an angel!"

"Tiens! What are you saying?"

"If m'sieu' does not appreciate the delicate morsel which Heaven has given him—" continued the waiter.

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, if there is another woman, I shall scratch her eyes out! But you speak very assuredly. What do you know?"

"Nothing, madame. Only, as a waiter, one sees things."

"Hold your tongue, or you will see the color of my hand!"

"So pink and white!" sighed the waiter, with raptured eyes. "Yes, m'sieu'. Coming! This minute!"

He darted away.

"Impertinent rascal!" muttered Mademoiselle Marcelle angrily. "This is what comes of Georges' leaving me to sit alone in a low café! Another woman! The idea!"

At this moment approached at a jaunty pace a tall, dark young man whose perturbed eyes sought the tables in front of the café with an anxious expectancy that changed to pleasure as he beheld Mademoiselle Marcelle.

"A thousand pardons, *chérie*, but——"

Mademoiselle Marcelle silently pointed to the accusing hands of the clock.

"I know, my angel, but——"

She daubed her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Who is this woman? Tell me her name, Georges! That is all I ask," she demanded.

Georges started.

"Her name?" he echoed, aghast. "What do you mean? I am late, it is true, but I was detained. I run my legs off to get here, and you fling a woman in my face!"

"And I love you so much!"

"Wait, my little pigeon! There is

something wrong here. It was an affair of business."

"Of business! You?"

Her hard laugh, had she been on the stage, would surely have brought her a rousing thunder of applause.

"Yes, business," said Georges, and sat back. "Our fortunes are made."

She gazed at him, bewildered.

"Our fortunes?"

"As you say!" cried Georges triumphantly, and drew out several attractively decorated pieces of paper.

"Look! What think you of your friend now?"

"But it is money!" cried Marcelle, astonished.

With great composure, she folded her handkerchief and put it in her hand bag. The day when Georges began to earn money was no day to be weeping.

"A thousand francs!"

Already Marcelle was discussing prices at the dressmaker's.

"A thousand francs!" repeated Georges. "A stroke of luck! Do you remember the night we were at the Scala, and, coming out, I picked up a necklace, and we took it to the prefecture? The owner has been found—a rich American—and in her joy, she rewarded me with a thousand francs."

"Ah! She! Did I not tell you? Was she pretty?"

"No!" answered Georges firmly.

"No—and old enough to be my grandmother. Fifty or sixty—perhaps more."

"The other woman is never too old to be harmless. Did you see her alone?"

"Assuredly not. Her husband was present."

"She was married, then?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not say so at first?" cried the disturbed Marcelle. "*Mon Dieu*, you are all the same, you men! Your greatest pleasure lies in torturing us!"

"Be reasonable, I implore you!" cried the miserable young man. "To-day we have more than we ever had, and you are overwhelmed with misery. Is it not enough that I tell you I adore you so passionately that I plan to take you on a long journey with me?"

"A journey?" gasped Marcelle.

"Where to?"

"To America—to New York."

"Really?"

"I swear it."

"Then you may kiss me," she murmured, relenting, and the soul of the unhappy waiter, who regarded them disconsolately from the door, was racked with further sorrow and regrets.

"Now tell me all," she commanded.

"To New York? But why?"

"Did I not tell you our fortunes were made? It is this way: You are a girl of experience. Your brain is as nimble as your fingers, which confect the adorable hats which Madame Berthe disposes of at such fabulous sums, and to whom? To the American ladies. It is understood that all Americans are rich. We, too, shall become rich. Listen!" He drew out a newspaper clipping. "Listen while I read you this:

"In New York the French are welcomed with open arms. In this city of vast wealth, where to each one, no matter how poor, is given a chance, it is not the aristocracy of age, of wealth, that counts, but that of brains, of talent—' And between ourselves,' he added modestly, 'nature has not done badly by us. But to continue: 'There is an assured place for each young man or woman who possesses that dash of genius which is the indisputable inheritance of the French race.'"

And carried away by the eloquence of Georges, Marcelle agreed that it must indeed be so, and that she would share the adventure.

"But you—what will you do, my poor Georges?" she inquired.

"Poof! A man of my intelligence



will not starve. Do not worry. But this talking makes one thirsty. Gustave!"

"Yes, sir," moaned the waiter in his ear.

"Two bocks!"

The waiter returned with the beer. He gulped as he set down the glasses in the atmosphere of happiness encircling the table.

"What is the matter with the fellow?" asked Georges, setting down his empty glass.

"Ah, m'sieu' has all the luck!" said the waiter in a somber tone.

"But this is very droll!"

Marcelle's hand descended upon Georges' lips.

"Sh! He is insane. He has been drinking. His feet are sore, no doubt, and he envies us who sit. Come—quickly!"

She dragged away the bewildered Georges.

"Feet!" groaned the waiter dismally. "Must I demonstrate that it is my heart which hurts me, not my feet? But what is this?"

His eyes brightened. He swept the franc from the marble top into his palm.

"That smells good. He is throwing his money around. And then perhaps, when he is broke, comes the chance of Gustave. Yes, m'sieu' the patron—immediately!"

Behold Marcelle and Georges on deck as they enter the harbor of New York.

"*C'est chic, ça!* What does the steward say? We must go down to the salon—for examination by the officials of the immigration—*Bien!*"

It did not occur to Georges that there was anything unofficial in his relationship to Marcelle. Why should it have? In Paris, one was free to mingle one's destiny with that of a charming companion, if one pleased, without interference from the law, one's neighbors,

or the voice of conscience. And he had simply set down the fact that Monsieur and Madame Ledoux of Paris were not polygamists or anarchists, that they had not been in prison, and that they were in possession of the sum required by the authorities.

The immigration officer was in a hurry. He had spent twenty minutes in a chat with an old acquaintance on the passenger list, and he was anxious to get through with his job. Which accounted for the fact that the case of Georges and Marcelle was dismissed in the most summary fashion, their landing cards O. K'd, and the pair of lovers permitted to set foot in the city of dreams.

A compatriot on the ship had given them the address of a French boarding house in the West Thirtieths, and they found a vacant room there. To be sure, it was not palatial, but, as Marcelle remarked after a preliminary sniff:

"One must begin at the bottom of the ladder. Courage, *mon ami*."

Dinner added to their early impression that here was their opportunity. The diners all had an air of prosperity, and Georges smoked a cigar which cost the enormous sum of fifteen cents.

After dinner, they strolled over to Broadway, gaped at the lights, and tramped up and down looking for a café with tables on the sidewalk, where they might sit down and gather impressions of the sources and purveyors of their future wealth. But their search revealed no such place, and in bewilderment they returned home.

"You see," explained Georges, "what a place this is, what a city of enterprise! No one has time to sit down and twiddle the thumb. *Au contraire*. One must keep moving. That is progress. In a year we shall be driving in our auto. I ask you, did you see any beggar run to pick up the end of my cigar? No. And you noticed the women? Chic—the something about them, eh?"

"As you say," said Marcelle a little sharply. "The women—— Yes."

"The women who in two weeks will be wearing all your creations," said Georges in hasty continuation. "What are other women, my beloved? The framework to display your hats. Now we must go *dodo*. To-morrow to look for work."

At breakfast they made the acquaintance of Mees Toquet, a friendly creature who took Marcelle to her heart.

"As you make hats—and hats of the Rue de la Paix—nothing is easier. I myself work for Madame Odile. Come with me, and I am sure you will find work."

"It is very kind of you, Mees Toquet. Go, my child," said Georges in hearty approval. "We must lose no chance, and while you are gone, I will stir myself and make some inquiries. Au revoir and good luck."

Marcelle came home in time for dinner and rushed up to her room. Georges, reclining in the one easy-chair and smoking one of the famous cigars, was reading a novel, quite at his ease.

"What did I tell you?" he cried enthusiastically, as she kissed him. "Was I not right? You have but to set foot here and the plums fall into your lap."

"Ah, you have a job, *mon coco*!" exclaimed Marcelle joyously. "My little Georges has got a position of importance?"

Georges beamed.

"At a salary which, to commence, is enormous—princely! Consider! I am to get twelve dollars a week—sixty francs! And you? What luck?" he added condescendingly.

"Madame Odile has engaged me."

"Splendid! And the pay is sufficient, eh?"

"Twenty dollars a week."

"A hundred francs!"

The light of triumph faded out of his eyes, and he shrugged his shoulders apologetically as he explained:

"For a man, it is harder. That is understood. But I am not proud. As you say, one must commence at the beginning. I am without jealousy of your success, *ma petite*. All my compliments. You have done superbly."

"But your employment—you have not said. It is chic, of course. What a pity it is that the work of the brain does not bring such immediate return as the work of the hands! Tell me."

Georges coughed and carefully extinguished the butt of his cigar.

"I have a position in a restaurant. Oh, it is very high class."

"As manager? No! Cashier? As dancer? That must be it."

He shook his head.

"No. As waiter."

"Oh, my brave Georges!"

"It is nothing," he assured her with a touch of pathos. "No matter. All will come right in time. And there are tips—ah!"

His expressive fingers plucked imaginary dollars from the air.

"To-morrow I commence. You will see then what you will see," he announced confidently. "I am a man of enterprise. I have made no money before in my life. All the better. My mind is free. I come here without system, without tradition. It is a matter of weeks only, and voilà—our fortune is well established. But there rings the bell for dinner. Let us descend. And no word to the others as to my business. A little of the bluff, eh? *Bien*."

At the end of the week, Georges displayed twenty-two dollars as his earnings.

"A mere nothing," he told Marcelle. "But things are going well, you see. Of course, my poor child, your salary is splendid, but a man needs more. I must see about a new overcoat at once."

Impulsively Marcelle thrust her money into his hand.

"It is yours, my Georges. Do with it as you will."

With an air of supreme magnificence, Georges returned it to her.

"It is yours—yours. Say no more about it."

It was unfortunate for the existence of their idyl that their hours of leisure did not coincide. Sunday morning was the only time in the week when one or the other was not at work, but Marcelle, seeing her savings accumulate, was content. And for the first time in her butterfly career, she began to think of a little home.

She mentioned it to Georges, but for some strange reason he did not respond with alacrity. He was a little distraught those days, devoting more attention to his toilet than to hers. He blossomed out in a new suit, a dashing waistcoat, a satin scarf, a wonderful overcoat, and shoes that were mirrors of elegance. His kisses were given on the run, and his embraces desultory. He had no time for anything but business—business.

Marcelle grew suspicious. She waited outside the restaurant one night and saw him drive off in a taxi with a lady. He did not come in until the early morning.

Marcelle was awake, and with half-closed eyes she watched him turn up the gas. She stirred, and he started.

"Ah, naughty! What will Madame Odile say if you are late to-morrow? It is wrong to lie awake, *chérie*."

She cut short his admonition:

"You love another woman, Georges."

"What are you saying? What nonsense?"

"It is true!" she cried. "I saw you to-night!"

"So you spied upon me! That was not a nice trick to play on your little rabbit. How ridiculous! An affair of business."

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, do not say that word again!"

"Listen, Marcelle! You are a woman of sense. The lady is about to open a restaurant. I am to have charge of it. Naturally we go to talk over the matter."

"I do not believe it!"

"That is your affair, then."

"You are no better than a rascal!"

"Marcelle!"

"Oh, how miserable I am!"

"Marcelle, *chérie*!"

He bent over her beseechingly. There was a sudden slap, and he straightened his back swiftly.

"*Crénom!* This is too much!" he growled in a temper. "*Eh bien!* If it pleases you to say it—it is true. She is rich. She is going to marry me. I am no dog that you should beat me. It is finished. I go forever. Adieu."

He crushed his hat on his head, hastily stuffed some clothes into a bag, and left her.

Next morning, Madame Odile looked in vain for one of her best milliners. When Mees Toquet came home that night, she ran up to Marcelle's room to find out what was the matter.

"It is Georges!" sobbed Marcelle.

"A quarrel—that happens often," Mees Toquet assured her, out of her long experience of rooming-house life.

"It is finished! He has left me!"

"He will come back. A little reflection, and you will have him again."

"Never! He is going to marry a rich woman."

"Eh? You were not husband and wife? That is bad, *ma pauvre petite*. Then you can do nothing. But there are plenty of other men——"

"But no Georges. Ah, we were so happy on the boat as we came across—so happy!"

"The boat? Wait—ah!" Mees Toquet's voice rang with excitement. "Tell me, my child, did you travel as married?"

"But no. As Monsieur and Madame Ledoux."

"And the official of the immigration passed you? It is strange. He must have failed to examine you carefully. Otherwise, he would not have let you land."

"But why not?"

"It is the law." Mees Toquet shrugged her shoulders. "One must obey the law here. A man may not bring one who is not his legal wife into this country."

"And if he does?"

"Then he is liable to be—how do they say it?—deported."

"Oh, but surely not Georges?"

"Yes, Georges can be deported if one informs upon him, but who will do that?"

"I will!" answered Marcelle fiercely. "Sooner than let him marry this woman here, I will go myself to the authorities. If he breaks the law, then he mends the law. It is justice."

"You may go home now," said the obliging official of the immigration office at the end of the tearful interview. "We have your address. Don't worry any more about Mr. Ledoux. We'll attend to him."

"You will not hurt him? I do not want that," she pleaded.

"We'll handle the goods carefully, miss. You might want to pick 'em up again."

"Never! Never!" swore Marcelle.

Which conversational snatch explains why, one evening, Mr. Georges Ledoux was invited to take a little stroll by two politely insistent gentlemen, who busied themselves about his traveling arrangements and did not desist their friendly attentions until the last gangway leading to the French liner had been withdrawn.

The first day out, Georges, with other passengers, was compelled to take to his berth. He did not appear till two days

later, when, staggering along the deck, he reeled as he caught sight of a familiar face crowning the mummy shape of a traveling rig.

"Marcelle!"

"Georges!"

"But this is a miracle! I did not expect to see you."

It seemed to him that she was undeniably embarrassed.

"I do not understand it," he insisted.

"How did you happen to come here?"

She wavered; then murmured:

"They have deported me."

"And me. Strange! What a droll country, my word! When I heard of this law of deporting, I was vastly amused. But one must obey, naturally. Ignorance is no excuse. Still, it is very sad to leave New York. But there is a something about Paris—I even long to see the melancholy face of that cursed Gustave. There is one thing I cannot understand. Who gave the show away?"

"It was me," she gulped.

"It was you—you?" he gasped, and choked. "But why?"

"Because I loved you."

"A fine way to show it!"

"But after they had obtained all the evidence against you, they arrested me as being equally culpable," she wailed. "And here we are—both deported!"

His mouth opened wide; his jaws moved convulsively several times, but no words came; and he walked away. After a little, he stole back. She was asleep, with the tear marks still visible on her pretty cheeks. He hesitated; then sat down by her. Soon his hand crept beneath the protecting rug and closed upon hers. The answering pressure showed that she was not so unconscious of his presence as he had imagined.

A week later, Gustave, the waiter at the Café of the Golden Snail, received a shock, for there walked in a

couple, well dressed, apparently prosperous, and happy.

"Hola, Gustave!" cried Georges gayly. "We are back from our voyage. Hurry along two bocks."

"What is that you say?" whispered the patron behind the bar, moistening

his lips in alarm, for Gustave had just leaned across and hissed his order:

"Two strychnines!"

"Are you mad?"

"That is what I should like to serve them," said Gustave gloomily. "But I suppose it will have to be two bocks."



### BROWN ARMS

I TELL myself that I am not for you,  
Nor you for me.

Between us lie the tangled skeins of life  
And destiny.

You are an autumn leaf before the wind.

Lightly you skim

Along life's surface, playing in the sun—

Brown-armed and slim.

And so I say it all must end. And then

You come along,

Lithe-limbed and white of teeth—your eager lips

Tender with song.

And you say, "Lover, love is in the air!

Come—let us play!"

And I, who fear life's utter grayness, smile

And let you stay.

And you say, "Lover, I adore your hair—

Your teeth—your breath!

Some day I mean to kiss your life away,

And drink your death!"

And I who know all that I know—somehow

I cease to care.

And work, or life, or death seem little things,

So you are there!

When all my reason cries against your lure,

Why do I lie,

Day after day, content within your arms—

Why, Brown Arms, why?

VIOLA BROTHERS SHORE.

# Ainslee's Book of the Month

THE ARROW OF GOLD, by Joseph Conrad;  
Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.

**J**OSEPH CONRAD, in the opinion of the present reviewer, is the greatest of living novelists. He writes in English, but he is a Pole by birth, and his life has been cosmopolitan. He followed the sea for twenty years. No race can wholly claim him, though it is the good fortune of all who read our language that he selected it for his work in fiction. He thought for a while of using French.

A new book by Joseph Conrad is the event of any publishing season. "The Arrow of Gold" has all the brilliance of style of his earlier novels. It contains more direct narrative, however, than most of them. The plot is closely knit, the action rapid. The portrait of the heroine is drawn with consummate artistry. In short, it is a romantic love story, an innovation for Conrad which should allure both his devotees and the general public.

The scene is laid at Marseilles in the 1870's. At that time the Carlist revolution in Spain was at its height, and Carlist juntas flourished in the large French cities. The presiding genius of the circle at Marseilles is Doña Rita, of peasant origin, but more recently the mistress of a great personality in Parisian life. She had in her "something of the women of all time," an infinite appeal, a subtle power over the hearts of men. There are many candidates for her love, but the two with whom we are concerned are Monsieur George, who tells the story, and Captain Blunt of South Carolina, an unreconciled Confederate officer in the service of Don Carlos.

Monsieur George attaches himself to the Legitimist cause, not because he cares about it one way or the other, but in order to serve Doña Rita and because there is adventure in the air. He fits out a vessel and runs contraband through the Alphonsist blockade. The stage is set for a typical Conrad story of the sea. Yet, except for a few paragraphs of vivid impressionism, introduced at studied intervals, the voyages of Monsieur George are not described. They form a romantic background for the hero, who returns from his dangerous enterprises to woo the incomparable Doña Rita.

Only Conrad could have invested the preliminaries of passionate love with the austerity that dominates the pages of "The Arrow of Gold." His lovers will accept nothing counterfeit. They rack each other with their exhibitions of pride, their renunciations, their clinging to subtle illusions. Tragedy seems to be the imminent, the only possible, climax. Nevertheless, love triumphs.

The grotesque episode of the Spaniard, Ortega, who tries to break into Doña Rita's room, and later runs off with her sanctimonious sister, etches itself deeply into the reader's memory.

"A wonderful tale with a flavor of wine in it and wreathed in clouds"—this phrase, used by the hero about Doña Rita's history, may well be applied to "The Arrow of Gold." It would be interesting to know to what extent the book is autobiographical. Conrad states that he had long contemplated writing it, and surely it is significant that he was in Marseilles in the 1870's, prior to his first voyage before the mast!

W. A. R.





## PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

EDWIN CARTY RANCK

**T**O paraphrase the late Mr. Bacon, some plays are to be seen, others to be eschewed, and very many are to be shunned and detested. Beyond all cavil, the last season in New York was the worst in the memory of the most aged first nighter. The number of plays to be eschewed by the discriminating play-goer was legion, and the number of plays to be shunned and detested was like a copy of the city directory. Theatrical novelty we had in superabundance, but, with the exception of imported plays, the only native products to exhibit qualities of distinction were both written by a woman—Rachel Crothers.

The plays of the past season that the discriminating theater-goer will remember are "Dear Brutus," "The Better 'Ole," "Miss Nelly of N'Orleans," "Redemption," "The Jest," "Lightnin'," "A Little Journey," and "39 East." The last two are Miss Crothers' plays, and they are a credit to American dramatic art.

There was a rumor last season that Mr. Belasco, who has never produced a big play during his entire career—with the possible exception of "The Easiest Way"—was quietly working on the *pièce de résistance* of his career, a play that was to justify his stage existence, so to speak. This play, it was stated, would be his swan song, after which he would retire. But of course it turned

out to be merely another press-agent yarn, and Mr. Belasco, instead of giving us a worth-while play in his old age, strained at a camel and produced a gnat—the gnat being "Dark Rosa-leen," a resurrected and shopworn example of Irish drama at its worst, recalling the shamrock drama of Dion Boucicault. It is a race-horse play—an Irish "In Old Kentucky," and it served to introduce that charming little actress, Eileen Huban, who jumped into immediate fame a few years ago in "The Grasshopper." Miss Huban is a tip-top little actress, but "Dark Rosaleen" is an exceptionally bad play, even judged by Belasco standards.

It is my own firm conviction that no man has done less for the American stage than David Belasco. He has had the money, the actors, and the opportunities to do big things for American theatric art, but he has been contented to produce tinsel and twaddle year in and year out. His productions always remind me of de-luxe editions of dime novels.

The past season was also notable for the conspicuous failure of Mr. Henry Miller as a producer of plays. He produced some four plays, several of them at the cozy little theater that bears his name, but not one of them was worth the doing. His latest effort was "Molière," one of the worst samples of rococo drama that it has ever been my

misfortune to have to sit through. It is to be deplored that the courageous men of real ideas and artistic consciences never seem to have the backing to do the things well that men like Henry Miller merely bungle.

It is now getting to be quite a fad with producers to have a summer season in New York, and it started off most auspiciously the last week in April, when Mr. William Le Baron's clever farce, "I Love You," proved that it is still possible to write farce that sparkles if the right man is doing the writing. Mr. Le Baron is the author of that other clever farce of two seasons ago, "The Very Idea," and of a musical comedy, "The Echo," for which Deems Taylor wrote the music. He has ideas and knows how to develop them amusingly.

In "I Love You," a wealthy young idler has a theory that it is environment which counts most in love affairs. So he wagers that an electrician of his acquaintance can marry a blasé society woman, provided the stage setting is just right. The wager is accepted and the fun begins. However, the society woman chooses the butler in preference to the electrician, who succumbs, in turn, to the maid. The cast was exceptionally good, Richard Dix giving an amusing performance as the electrician and Gilbert Douglas injecting much gayety through his impersonation of the butler.

Martha Hedman returned to Broadway in a concoction dubbed "Three for Diana," which is not worth reviewing. It was a conventional drama conventionally acted. Miss Hedman has ability as an actress, but she will never have opportunities to prove it unless she gets hold of better plays than this sort of piffle.

I can't let slip the opportunity to praise unstintedly the work of Tony Sarg's marionettes at the Punch and Judy Theater. They appeared in a dramatization of Thackeray's "The

Rose and the Ring," made by Hettie Louise Mick. These marionettes were so much better than some of the other marionettes appearing at the leading theaters that I found myself wondering why it wouldn't be a good plan to discard at least two-thirds of the flesh-and-blood marionettes on Broadway and give Mr. Sarg free rein. Then, too, the Sarg marionettes use so much better English than their prototypes in the flesh. It is to be hoped that Mr. Sarg will continue the good work next season.

"She's a Good Fellow," a musical comedy by Anne Caldwell and Jerome Kern, should prove a good summer success, because it has all of the light qualities that one usually associates with a summer show, and with such entertainers in the cast as Ivy Sawyer, Joseph Santley, Scott Welch, and Olin Howard, this attraction will probably remain on view for some time to come.

Will Morissey and Elizabeth Brice are presenting at the Princess Theater a sort of theatrical club sandwich entitled "Toot Sweet." It has vaudeville and musical trimmings on the side and is guaranteed not to produce a headache, no matter how warm the day. An excellent attraction for the T. B. M.

"The Lady in Red," another summer attraction, is here while I am writing this article, but I am afraid that the lady will be conspicuous by her absence long before the reader sees these words. It is the most flagrant example of shopworn musical comedy that I have ever seen. If it does outlast the summer, it will be because play-goers are hungry for musical shows, no matter how bad.

"John Ferguson," a dour and doleful study of Irish Life by St. John G. Ervine, is a good antidote for the nauseating sweetness of "Dark Rosaleen." It clears the Irish atmosphere of much buncombe, just as Bernard Shaw's play, "John Bull's Other Island" attempts to do. This is a powerful and well-written

tragedy in the genre of Synge's best work. The conflict in the play is caused by the divergent views of John Ferguson, a pigheaded religious crank, and his children, who are exponents of twentieth-century philosophy.

John Ferguson is the sort of man—some of them are still with us—who lives in an aura of impossible spirituality and flies to the Bible in times of sorrow, finding there a solace that enables him to stand up against "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." But the time comes when John Ferguson must confront an unpromising fact. His daughter has been betrayed, and he is called upon to act. But the God that he took from his printed book will not allow him to mete out justice. This is God's duty, not John Ferguson's. Then his children, refusing to accept this Biblical doctrine, take vengeance into their own hands.

It is a somber, powerful play and is the second to be produced by the Theater Guild. Certainly it is a rare achievement. "John Ferguson" comes pretty close to being a great play. It could be cut here and there to advantage, thus making it more compact and dynamic, but even as it stands, it marks a distinct advance in the new stagecraft of America. It is the drama itself that has appealed to the Guild and, therefore, it is presented in a mood of admirable restraint. The acting of Dudley Digges and other members of the company was almost on a par with the play. But the Guild should weed out some of its amateurs. It is all right for idealistic and well-meaning amateurs to produce plays, but they should recruit the ranks of their actors with professionals. If this were more generally done, much of the adverse criticism that has been directed against the little theater would, I am sure, die out, particularly when an organization is doing such splendid pioneer work as the Theater Guild.

After seeing "Pretty Soft," a farce by Paul Potter, I found myself humming a little refrain, the words of which were:

Bedrooms to right of them,  
Bedrooms to left of them,  
Front of them, back of them,  
Beckoned and lured!

Mr. Potter should, as a matter of fact, have called his new bedroom farce "The House of a Thousand Bedrooms." By so doing, he could have successfully warded off all competition, for even such a theatrical "bedroomist" as Al Woods would have been discouraged when he read that title. Al has never yet had more than three bedrooms in any one farce at a time. But in the second act of "Pretty Soft," there were seven bedroom doors. Seven—count 'em—seven!

Mr. Potter, who is one of our most successful yellow dramatists, evidently determined to out-bedroom every bedroom farce in New York, but while his "effort"—and it certainly is an effort—is illumined by occasional flashes of wit, the situations belong to the vintage that rolling time hath pressed and pressed hard. To carry out this pressing simile, I might add that the article pressed reminds me of an old pair of trousers that has been so sharply creased that the cloth split and rendered the garment worthless for further wear. Even such farcical stand-bys as Edward Nicander, Rose Coghlan, and Dallas Wel-ford could not save the trousers—I mean play—from collapse. By the way, does the title, "Pretty Soft," refer to the public or the human brain?

One of the most interesting announcements that I have heard in a long time is that Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothern are to return to the stage in October in revivals of "Twelfth Night," "The Taming of the Shrew," and "Hamlet." It is splendid news to learn that Miss Marlowe has entirely recovered from the illness that forced her

to retire from the stage five years ago. Lovers of Shakespearean drama will welcome the return of these gifted players.

George Pierce Baker, professor of dramatic literature at Harvard University, founder of the famous playwriting course at Harvard known as "English 47" and also the father of the "47 Workshop," where plays by promising young students are tried out, has written a book on playwriting that clears the air of many doubts and misunderstandings of his work at Harvard and puts forever the quietus on the statement that he is "trying to make playwrights overnight."

"To create a dramatist would be a modern miracle," writes Professor Baker in his preface. "To develop theories of the drama apart from the practice of recent and remoter dramatists of different countries would be visionary. This book tries in the light of historical practice merely to distinguish the permanent from the impermanent in technique. It endeavors, by showing the inexperienced dramatist how experienced dramatists have solved problems similar to his own, to shorten a little his time of apprenticeship."

Professor Baker says that he has written for the person who cannot be content except when writing plays, and not for the person seeking methods of conducting a course in dramatic technique. To write a good play, Professor Baker says that a man must work under three great masters—Constant Practice, Exacting Scrutiny of the Work, and Time.

"Only when he has stood the tests of these masters is he the matured artist," adds the author.

Al Woods, who returned from Europe several months ago with a batch of new plays for next season, brings back most cheering news from London. He says that the American play has become *the* thing in London and

that, more extraordinary still, English playwrights cannot get production in England until their plays have first been produced in America and stamped with our approval. If Charles Frohman were alive to-day, he would be flabbergasted at this state of affairs, because Mr. Frohman would never produce a play in this country that had not first had the approval of London. He did less to develop the aspiring American playwright than any producer of his time.

Mr. Woods points with great pride to the fact that many of the greatest successes of the London season were American plays. For instance, there was "Uncle Sam," the English version of "Friendly Enemies" at the Haymarket; "Business Before Pleasure" at the Savoy; "Eyes of Youth," with Gertrude Elliott, at the St. James; "Fair and Warmer" at the Prince of Wales; three companies of "Within the Law" and three of "Daddy Long Legs."

It is interesting to compare two plays that have been great successes in this country and in London. "The Better 'Ole," in which Mr. and Mrs. Coburn have achieved such fame, was produced in New York exactly as Captain Bruce Bairnsfather wrote it, all of the cockney slang being preserved intact. And New Yorkers understood all of the English slang and enjoyed it. Willard Mack's melodrama, "Kick In," was delightedly received by English audiences, with all its American slang intact. However, the Britishers most emphatically *did not* understand the Yankee lingo at all, so a glossary was appended to the program, carefully explaining what our slang meant. And every English definition was wrong! Which goes to prove that Britishers are still insular.

Some more interesting news that has percolated from London is to the effect that Gilbert Miller, the son of Henry Miller—and the young man who, by the

way, advised his father not to produce "The Better 'Ole" before the Coburns had acquired it—has been highly successful with his plays on the other side. In fact, he has been much more successful than his father, whose last season was one of the most disastrous of his career, owing to the fact that he persisted in producing plays that no one wanted to see.

The theatrical wiseacres along Broadway are already prophesying that the New York summer season will be a short one, but quite merry while it lasts. These amusement prophets are offering odds that the next theatrical season will

begin as early as the third week of July. Managers are trying out new plays earlier each year. Already they are beginning to divulge their plans for next winter.

For instance, "Friendly Enemies," which has had the longest run of any play produced in many years, opened on July 22d and at this writing was still drawing crowds to the box office. "Three Faces East" opened on August 13th, and "Lightnin'" on August 26th. Verily, the dog days are beginning to be the show days, and that is probably why the managers are fond of "trying it on the dog."



## TO A LADY WHO SINGS IN THE OPERA

WE met in that delightful house  
At Tarrytown above the stream,  
You sang a song of Richard Strauss,  
I drained the substance of a dream.

Three perfect days we dwelt alone  
And you forgot you had a voice;  
Three days our hearts to one had grown,  
Three nights our senses did rejoice.

Last night you sang in "La Bohème"  
And kissed Caruso utterly.  
I hung my head in bitter shame—  
You had rehearsed your rôle with me.  
JOSEPH BERNARD RETHY.

## Talks With Ainslee's Readers

FEW modern types are so interesting as the social chameleon. By this we mean the brilliant, sophisticated product of our times, which dreads ennui as the worst of evils, is hungry for sensations and willing to experiment with a new kind of love affair as readily as a new game. They are all chameleons in Katharine Hill's complete novelette, which will be a feature of the September AINSLEE'S. The scene opens on a yacht, fogbound off the Maine coast. Carola Chevrillon, a fascinating widow, is in love with Reverdy Saxe. Since he refuses, however, to see in her anything but a good pal, she is allowing Austin Harland to flirt with her. Betty, Reverdy's sister, is conducting a merry little flirtation of her own. When the fog clears, the party lands and goes clamming. Reverdy meets a beautiful, but illiterate "native," Hazel Rivers, and promptly becomes infatuated. The complications that follow make this novelette one of the most original that we have ever offered you. Its title, "Chameleons Up to Date," is admirably suggestive of what the reader may expect.

THE short stories listed for September make a typical AINSLEE'S program. "Coming All the Way," by Sarah Glover Curtis, has exceptional vigor and freshness. The hero is a masterful business executive, but the heroine also has a will of her own. Which of these two finally pockets his pride for the sake of the happiness so important to them

both? The author keeps you guessing and works up to a skillful climax. "Something for Nothing," by William C. Lèngel, is a love story of moving-picture actors and producers in the days when the "game" was in its infancy. "The Dark Horse," by Nancy Boyd, has the subtle charm that distinguishes this new writer's work. "The Lovely Quitter," by Du Vernet Rabell, and "The Centaur," by William Salisbury, are tales that are distinctly out of the ordinary. Anice Terhune writes about the prima donna, Giulia Grisi, one of the "superwomen" of the last century, and Edwin Carty Ranck reviews the current plays.

OUR serial, "The Joyous Dreamer," by Vennette Herron, is already causing favorable comment. We print a long installment in the present issue and are planning to give it an unusually generous amount of space next month also. Talking about serials, it is not too early to tell you that we hope to get May Edginton's latest—an absorbing novel about life in London following the close of the war. The heroine has been a volunteer worker at the front and finds it impossible to return to the tame domesticity of 1914. She prefers to make a career for herself. There are difficulties to be overcome, sentimental and otherwise, and the result is corking narrative. Publication of this novel, the title of which will be announced later, is planned to begin in AINSLEE'S in the fall.

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# Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man"

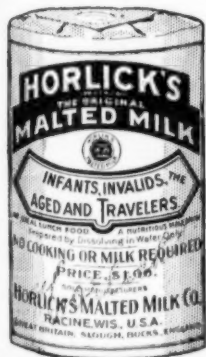
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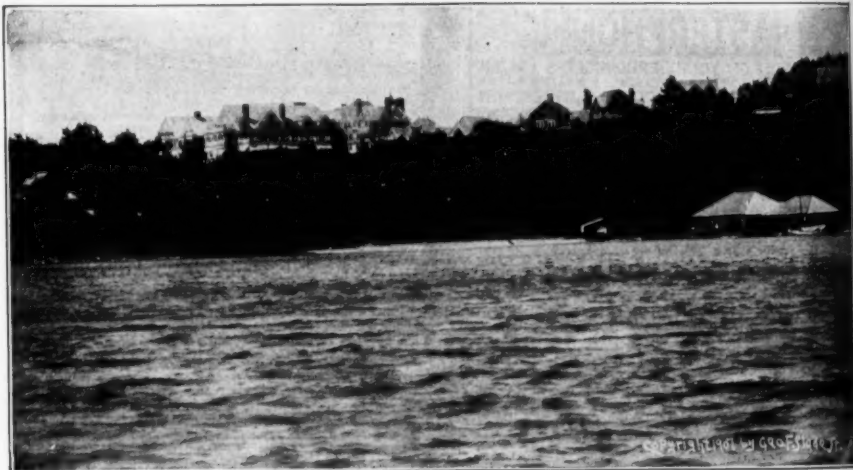
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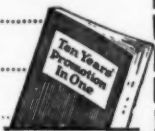
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